

THOMAS A KEMPIS COLLECTION

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10 BOOKS

BOOKS INDEX

[THOMAS A KEMPIS](#)

[THOMAS A KEMPIS COLLECTION](#)

[A MEDITATION ON THE INCARNATION OF CHRIST, SERMONS ON THE LIFE AND
PASSION OF OUR LORD AND OF HEARING AND SPEAKING GOOD WORDS](#)

[PRAYERS AND MEDITATIONS ON THE LIFE OF CHRIST](#)

[SAINT LYDWINE OF SCHIEDAM](#)

[SERMONS TO THE NOVICES REGULAR](#)

[THE CHRONICLE OF THE CANONS REGULAR OF MOUNT SAINT AGNES](#)

[THE FOLLOWING OF CHRIST](#)

[THE FOUNDERS OF THE NEW DEVOTION](#)

[THE IMITATION OF CHRIST](#)

[THE LITTLE GARDEN OF ROSES AND VALLEY OF LILIES](#)

[THE SOLILOQUY OF THE SOUL](#)

[ILLUSTRATIONS](#)

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Thomas à Kempis, C.R.S.A.; (c. 1380 – 25 July 1471) was a Dutch canon regular of the late medieval period and the author of *The Imitation of Christ*, one of the most popular and best known Christian books on devotion. His name means Thomas "of Kempen", his hometown, and in German he is known as Thomas von Kempen. He also is known by various spellings of his family name: Thomas Haemerken; Thomas Hammerlein; Thomas Hemerken and Thomas Hämerken. Thomas à Kempis wrote the biographies of New Devotion members—Gerard Groote, Floris Radewijns, John van de Gonde, and John Brinckerinck. His important works include a series of sermons to the novices of St. Augustine Monastery, including *Prayers and Meditations on the Life of Christ*, *Meditations on the Incarnation of Christ*, *Of True Compunction of Heart*, *Soliloquy of the Soul*, *Garden of Roses*, *Valley of Lilies*, and a *Life of St. Lidwina of Schiedam*. Kempis's 1441 autograph manuscript of *The Imitation of Christ* is available in the Bibliothèque Royale in Brussels.

A MEDITATION ON THE
INCARNATION
OF CHRIST, SERMONS ON THE LIFE
AND
PASSION OF OUR LORD AND OF
HEARING
AND SPEAKING GOOD WORDS

THOMAS A KEMPIS

E-BOOK ALSO AVAILABLE IN PAPERBACK.

A MEDITATION ON THE INCARNATION OF CHRIST SERMONS ON THE LIFE AND
PASSION OF OUR LORD AND OF HEARING AND SPEAKING GOOD WORDS

BY THOMAS À KEMPIS CANON REGULAR OF THE CONGREGATION OF WINDESHEIM
AUTHORISED TRANSLATION FROM THE TEXT OF THE EDITION OF MICHAEL JOSEPH
POHL, PH.D.

BY DOM VINCENT SCULLY, C.R.L.
(PERMISSU SUPERIORUM)

LONDON KEGAN PAUL, TRENCH, TRÜBNER & CO., LTD. DRYDEN HOUSE, GERRARD
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TO MY ESTEEMED FRIEND SIR FRANCIS CRUISE

CONTENTS

A MEDITATION ON THE INCARNATION OF CHRIST, SERMONS ON THE LIFE AND PASSION OF OUR LORD AND OF HEARING AND SPEAKING GOOD WORDS

INTRODUCTION

A MEDITATION ON THE INCARNATION OF CHRIST

HERE BEGINNETH A MEDITATION ON THE INCARNATION OF CHRIST, ACCORDING TO THE TESTIMONIES OF HOLY WRIT

HERE FOLLOW TESTIMONIES FROM THE NEW TESTAMENT

A PRAYER TO GREET OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

A PRAYER TO CHRIST, WHO IS THE TRUE LIGHT, WAY, TRUTH AND LIFE

SERMONS OF THE LIFE AND PASSION OF OUR LORD, TO WIT, FROM THE ADVENT OF OUR LORD

I
OF THE DESIRE OF THE PROPHETS AND OF DEVOUT PREPARATION FOR THE
COMING OF CHRIST

II
OF MEETING AND WELCOMING THE HEAVENLY KING

III
ON CHRISTMAS DAY. OF THE FEASTS OF THE SOUL

IV
ON CHRISTMAS NIGHT. OF SEEKING THE INFANT JESUS

V
OF THE DEVOUT VISITING OF THE NEW-BORN INFANT JESUS

VI
OF ABIDING NEAR THE VENERABLE CRIB OF CHRIST

VII
OF THE JOY OF THIS DAY, AND THE DEVOUT SERVICE OF JESUS

VIII
OF THE DESIRE OF SEEING AND EMBRACING JESUS

IX

TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN, THAT SHE SHOW US HER SON, JESUS

X

OF THE LOSS AND THE FINDING OF JESUS IN THE TEMPLE

XI

OF FOUR WAYS OF SEEING JESUS, ACCORDING TO THE AFFECTION OF DEVOTION

XII

OF THE SACRED INSTITUTION OF THE FAST, AFTER THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS
CHRIST

XIII

OF TAKING UP NOW A MORE FERVENT AMENDMENT OF LIFE

XIV

OF THE GOING UP OF MOSES INTO MOUNT SINAI

XV

OF THE WORDS OF JESUS, AND CLEANNES OF HEART

XVI

OF THE LOVE OF JESUS AND SELF-DENIAL

XVII

OF FOLLOWING THE POVERTY OF JESUS, AND CASTING ASIDE CARE FOR
TEMPORAL THINGS

XVIII

OF THE WEARINESS OF JESUS AND HIS SAVING DOCTRINE

XIX

OF THE WRITING OF JESUS AND HIS MERCY TOWARDS THE SINFUL WOMAN

XX

OF KEEPING HUMILITY FROM THE CONSIDERATION OF OUR OWN WEAKNESS

XXI

PASSION SUNDAY. OF LAMENTING OVER OUR LORD'S PASSION

XXII

OF THE CROSS OF JESUS, WHICH HE BORE FOR US

XXIII

OF THE MERIT OF OUR LORD'S PASSION, AND THE DIGNITY OF THE HOLY CROSS

XXIV

OF THE MANIFOLD FRUIT FROM REMEMBRANCE OF THE LORD'S PASSION, AND OF
THANKFULNESS THEREFORE

XXV

OF PROFITABLE EXERCISE IN THE PASSION OF CHRIST

XXVI

OF SEVEN NOTABLE POINTS OF MEDITATION ON THE PASSION OF CHRIST

XXVII

ON PALM SUNDAY, OF THE PROCESSION OF CHRIST, AND OF THE SIX CLASSES OF
MEN, WHO HONOUR CHRIST

XXVIII

OF THE RIDING OF CHRIST, NOT IN PHARAOH'S CHARIOT, BUT ON THE ASS OF
HUMILITY

XXIX

OF THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST, AND THE SPIRITUAL CONSOLATION OF THE
SOUL

XXX

OF THE JOY OF THE LORD'S RESURRECTION

XXXI

OF THE MYSTIC NAME OF THE PASCH, AND THE LEADING OF A NEW LIFE

XXXII

OF THE ASCENSION OF JESUS INTO HEAVEN

XXXIII

ON THE FEAST OF PENTECOST, OF THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY GHOST

XXXIV

OF THE COMFORT OF THE HOLY GHOST

XXXV

OF THE HOLY AND UNITED LIFE OF THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH IN JERUSALEM

OF HEARING AND SPEAKING GOOD WORDS

A MEDITATION ON THE INCARNATION
OF CHRIST, SERMONS ON THE LIFE
AND PASSION OF OUR LORD AND OF
HEARING AND SPEAKING GOOD
WORDS

INTRODUCTION

A NEW critical text of the “*Omnia Opera*” of Thomas à Kempis is being edited by Dr. M. Joseph Pohl, of Bonn, in seven volumes, of which four have already appeared, and the remainder are to be issued in the course of 1907. An eighth volume is to contain a life of the author, a dissertation on his various writings, and a vindication of his title to the “*Imitation*” by the same industrious hand. The publishers, Messrs. Herder, are doing their work in a way worthy of the subject matter, and of the painstaking toil of the editor; their volumes are a pleasure to behold and handle, a masterpiece of the printer’s and the bookbinder’s art, a contrast indeed to the unwieldy tomes and cramped letterpress, to which, apart from the “*Imitation*,” students of the Ven. à Kempis have hitherto been accustomed. From this edition is taken Dr. Duthoit’s translation, “*Prayers and Meditations on the Life of Christ*,” published in 1904 by Messrs. Kegan Paul, as also the present volume and the remainder, five in all yet to appear, of this series, embracing, with the exception of the “*Imitation*,” the complete works of à Kempis. Various parts, in fact quite a large proportion of these writings have been already rendered into English, and in many cases well, but at various times, by various hands, in various forms; and it was felt that even a thorough supplement of the portions not yet translated or not translated satisfactorily could in no wise compare with the advantages of a complete, uniform edition, one in fact to rival in English the work so admirably done by Dr. Pohl and Messrs. Herder in the original.

The fact that there is a demand, irrespective of class and creed, for these writings of à Kempis in the vulgar tongue, is one that speaks well for the English people. And whatever other reasons may be brought forward in explanation, it seems to me that the chief cause is one that lies deep in the heart and conscience of the nation. The remarkable love of Englishmen for the “*Imitation*” and for the other works of the saintly à Kempis may be

traced to the strong, personal love which, in however lesser a degree, they share with him for Our Divine Saviour.

It is well known that in pre-Reformation days England was famous for her devotion to the person of the Incarnate Son of God. She was called the most Christian nation of Europe, and precisely, it seems, because of her deep-rooted love and reverence for Christ. The unhappy upheaval of the sixteenth century wrought many sad changes and brought in its train irreparable losses. These have been further accentuated by the countless religious divisions that immediately followed and that still daily spring up around us. But the love of Jesus Christ was too firmly set in the depths of the spirit and traditions of the English people ever to be wholly changed or entirely lost. And for those numerous pious souls who to-day long and pray for the re-union of Christendom there is no more assured motive for the hope that they cherish, no basis more practical for what efforts they can individually essay, than this common love for the Master, Whose name we all glory to bear.

The great attraction, then, which the mysticism of Thomas à Kempis and of the whole school of Windesheim exercises over the English people is to be found in the principal character of that mysticism, an overflowing, simple, almost childlike love and devotion for the person of the Divine Saviour. The opening words of the "Imitation" strike the keynote: "Let it be our chief study to meditate upon the life of Jesus Christ." And the whole spiritual philosophy of that masterpiece may be summed up in the counsel: Shake off all that can hinder free access to Jesus; eagerly embrace all that can make the soul more like to Jesus, bring her nearer to Him, confirm her in closer union of divine love. There are passages there, whole chapters, familiar to all the world, which treat directly of this union in love, and which breathe the most pure and ardent affection. But from the very nature of the work, this latter element finds more free and tender, though certainly not more deep and full expression in the author's other and less-known writings.

What can compare, for instance, with the exquisite tenderness in some of the passages of the Sermons on the Infant Saviour, V–VIII, in this volume? Read especially Sermon VIII, where free rein is given to devotion in kissing the "feet, hands, and mouth of Jesus." And again in Sermon VII, who cannot relish something of the poetry of the sublime simplicity with which

the venerable author offers himself to render various little menial services in the Cave of Bethlehem. Bethlehem indeed and Calvary always seem to appeal with the greatest force to the holy Canon Regular, and to call forth the tenderest expressions of the burning love which consumed his soul. And herein again we find him in touch with the truest Christian instincts of the English people, for whom, in spite of growing ignorance, indifference, and materialism, Christmas and Good Friday are still the chief solemnities of the year.

In addition to this general influence over a whole nation which à Kempis wields as a true interpreter of its noblest aspirations, and apart also from the power, second only to that of Holy Writ, exercised over countless generations by the pages of the “Imitation,” numberless individual instances might be cited of the fascination which the personality of this humble Religious exerts, and of the enthusiasm which his writings arouse in almost every age and country. One has only to remember for a moment the host of zealous scholars who have stood forth to defend the title of à Kempis to the “Imitation” from the day it was first impugned, and whose learned and voluminous labours have now, we may well hope, settled the question for ever.

Two of these, and by no means the least devoted or illustrious in the roll, are with us and active still, Sir Francis Cruise and Dr. Pohl, and each dates his hero-worship of à Kempis from earliest childhood. The former still recalls with gratitude his first copy of the “Imitation,” presented him by his sister. The perusal so awakened his interest and enthusiasm that his question at once was, what manner of man had written this? It was then he first learnt of the regrettable controversy, to the solution of which he henceforth devoted the scanty leisure of a most strenuous career, a labour of love which has been to a great extent its own reward, and which has earned for him the esteem and gratitude of thousands. It is due to his suggestion that the present writer first conceived the idea of a complete translation of all the works of à Kempis, a labour, he said, which had been the dream of his life. It is to him, therefore, that this volume is affectionately dedicated.

Dr. Pohl also, in a touching little passage, “Thomæ à Kempis, Opera Omnia,” vol. ii, p. 484, traces back his love of the author to the first-remembered lessons of a simple, pious mother, whose reading was almost entirely confined to her prayerbook and her “Imitation.” One result of these

early impressions is the new edition to which reference has been already made, the fruit of years of patient scholarly labour and research, a work which will doubtless render the good Professor's name as immortal as that of à Kempis himself.

With regard to the present volume, "A Meditation on the Incarnation of Christ, etc.," Dr. Pohl's text is a careful edition of the autograph MS. preserved in the Royal Library, Brussels, 4585–4587. An inscription is inserted to the effect: "Dono dedit anno 1755 R. P. Rumoldus Waynants museo nostro praesente et consentiente R. P. Provincia(le)." On the top of the first page is written further: "Collegij Soctis Jesu Contraci." A Jesuit, Simon Wynants, was Professor of Grammar at the time and place mentioned in these two notices, and the presumption is that the donor of the manuscript was a relative of his. In any case, at the suppression of the Society, 1773, the valuable manuscript found its way, with so many other treasures of the Jesuit libraries in Belgium, to Brussels.

The Codex contains, in addition to the Meditation and Sermons, the "Alphabetum Monachi," a fragment in Low German, "Van goeden woerden to horen ende die to spreken," and some canticles. These latter seem to have been added as an afterthought to fill some odd pages; the "Alphabetum" is found also in other manuscripts, and I am giving its translation in a subsequent volume, containing several treatises, all concerning life and discipline in the cloister. But the German fragment, of which Dr. Pohl gives a Latin version, I thought as well to place here, ending this volume as it ends the autograph codex, with its date, 1456.

This date, 1456, at which time Thomas à Kempis was in his seventy-seventh year, of itself signifies nothing more than that this small treatise was then copied and the codex completed. But from internal evidence Dr. Pohl is of opinion that the other works translated here are of the same period.

The titles here given, "A Meditation on the Incarnation of Christ," and "Sermons on the Life and Passion of Our Lord," are those assigned by the author himself and by all his editors, with the exception of Sommalius, whose edition has hitherto been the best known and most used. Sommalius puts the Meditation and Sermons together under one head, "Conciones et Meditationes triginta sex utilissimae," with the following interesting appreciation: "In this second part of the first volume are contained both

sermons and meditations, very profitable and devout. The sermons are such that they seem to be meditations. Likewise the meditations are so written that sermons can be made of them.”

A striking likeness will be found between the contents of the present volume and Dr. Duthoit’s translation, already mentioned, “Prayers and Meditations on the Life of Christ.” Dr. Pohl collects from the two works a number of parallel passages of evident similarity. Indeed, it is the eminent critic’s opinion that this resemblance was the occasion of the puzzling omission, without a word of explanation, in Sommalius’ third edition of the above “Prayers and Meditations,” which had already appeared in his second, under the title “De vita et beneficiis, etc.” This second edition is the best that appears under Sommalius’ name. At the time of publishing the third edition the learned Jesuit was already eighty years of age, and moreover actively engaged in other affairs. Dr. Pohl then argues that he left the care of this new edition to his publisher, with the result that the latter, noticing the similarity between the two treatises in question, took the liberty, without his knowledge or consent, of suppressing one of them.

The question will naturally occur to many, whether these sermons were actually delivered as such, and, if delivered, to whom. We know that for two periods of his life, covering a considerable number of years, Thomas à Kempis was sub-prior of the Canonry of Mount St. Agnes. One of the duties of this office was the care and instruction of the novices and younger professed brethren. And in fact we have a whole volume of sermons by à Kempis, thirty in all, addressed to novices, a translation of which will appear shortly. With regard to these the author expressly states that they are a collection of discourses “given at different times to our novices by way of sweet conference.” There is another treatise of “Nine Sermons to the Brethren.” But we know from Francis Tolensis and other biographers that à Kempis frequently preached to the people also, who, as the fame of his holiness of life and eloquence and unction of word spread abroad, flocked in crowds to the Mount to hear him. Hence the inference would be that these present Sermons, treating of the mystery of our Redemption from its revelation to the prophets to the descent of the Holy Ghost, were in the first instance actually preached to the faithful. The difficulty is that much therein seems addressed directly to religious, and that the whole tone is of too elevated a devotion for the people in general.

However, we must bear in mind the particular class of faithful who would form the majority of his audience, and the close connection of these with the Canons of the Windesheim Congregation. To realize this better we must go back to the origin of this Congregation, as described by John Buschius in his “Chronicles of Windesheim,” and by à Kempis himself in his charming biographies of Gerard Groote, Florence Radewyn, and others their disciples, an excellent translation of which forms one of the volumes of this series, “The Founders of the New Devotion.” The question is treated at some length in my “Life of the Venerable Thomas à Kempis” (London, Washbourne), ch. i–v.

To give here a brief résumé: Gerard Groote was a cleric of Deventer, in Holland, who, after a more or less worldly youth, came under the influence of the great religious movement, which invaded the Low Countries in the latter half of the fourteenth century, and became himself its chief protagonist. At the end of three years’ retirement in the Carthusian Convent of Monichuisen, acting on the advice of friends there, Gerard went forth to communicate to others by word and example some of the zeal for perfection with which he was himself filled. To this end he received deacon’s orders from the Bishop of Utrecht—his humility forbade him ever to aspire to the priesthood—and authority also to preach. “Clergy, religious, and laity, men, women, and children, learned and ignorant, princes, magistrates, lawyers, tradesmen, servants, pilgrims, and beggars—all flocked to hear the new apostle, and listened for hours to his impassioned exhortations to repent of their sins, to despise the fleeting pleasures of the world, to lead a better life. His words bore marvellous fruit. Besides the many sinners whom he recalled to a sense of their duty, numbers of the clergy and laity placed themselves unreservedly in his hands, and under his direction began to lead lives that in simplicity, devotion, and contempt of the world rivalled those of the primitive Christians.”

Through much misrepresentation and some unfortunate misunderstanding an inhibition was procured from the Ordinary forbidding Groote to preach. He submitted at once. Retiring to his native town, he now devoted himself unreservedly to the task of forming to a perfect Christian life the many who had been converted by his burning eloquence. A large band of disciples, priests, clerics and laymen, gathered round him, not forsaking their ordinary avocations, but united simply by an ardent pursuit of holiness, and an

earnest emulation of the fervour of the first Christians, the unworldliness or other-worldliness, poverty, simplicity, and devotion of early days. At the suggestion of his most devoted admirer and follower, Florence Radewyn, Gerard consented that some, who so chose, should live together in community, though still bound by no manner of vow. The greater proportion of those who availed themselves of this permission were poor students, frequenting the public schools of Deventer. One stringent rule was that all should labour for their maintenance. This was to prevent abuses which, throughout the Netherlands and elsewhere, had arisen in similar bodies of men and women, who had commenced in a laudable spirit of poverty to live on alms, but who had degenerated into idle and insolent beggars. The chief work undertaken by the students was that of copying manuscripts, a highly-appreciated and well-paid service in those days, before the invention of the press. At the same time, a community was formed of pious females, who, following a similar manner of life under the guidance of a confessor, supported themselves also by the labour of their hands. They were called simply, "Brothers and Sisters of the Common Life." The whole movement was known as the New Devotion, and its followers styled the Devout. These latter terms are of frequent occurrence throughout the works of à Kempis.

Gerard Groote, however, anxious for the continuance of the good work and for its preservation against opposition from without and disintegrating elements within, had already conceived the idea of placing the whole body under the protection and guidance of a canonically instituted religious Order already existing in the Church. While he was maturing his plans and looking for resources to make a commencement, Deventer was devastated by one of the periodical plagues of those days.

Gerard himself fell a victim to his devotedness to the stricken, and at the very moment when the legacy of a pious and wealthy friend had removed the financial difficulties which had hitherto stood in the way of his scheme. However, on his death, bed, as the expression of his last wishes, he told the weeping brethren that as soon as possible some of them should enter an Order approved by the Church, and from the cloister be the guides, directors and protectors of the Devout still living in the world. They asked him which Order they should join. Some suggested the Carthusians. Groote objected that they were too secluded for their purpose. Others mentioned

the Cistercians. The Master replied that these were too severe. "Rather," said he, "you should enter the Order of Canons Regular. For this Order follows an easier rule, and is well adapted to all who are just able to serve God in holy religion. Neither do these Canons seem to differ much from you in their manner of life, except that they observe by profession and vow what you observe without vows, to wit, charity, and poverty, chastity, and obedience."

And in effect, shortly after the death of Groote, six Devout Brethren founded the monastery of Windesheim, and made their profession in the Order of Canons Regular as the first members of a Congregation, which in a marvellously short space of time covered all the Netherlands with new establishments and affiliated centres. I hope to speak more at length of the Congregation of Windesheim and of the Canonical Order itself in introductory notes to subsequent volumes of this series.

For the first years of its existence the new Congregation drew all its recruits from among the Devout. The greater number of the canonical foundations also owed their origin to a humble community of Brothers; Mt. St. Agnes itself, the cloistral home of our venerable author, is a striking instance, as may be seen from the opening pages of his "Chronicle of Mt. St. Agnes." Throughout this Chronicle, as also that of Windesheim, we find constant proofs of the amicable relations, of patronage on the one hand and willing submission on the other, existing between the Canons Regular living under vows in the cloister, and the Congregations, as they were called, or communities of Devout Brothers and Sisters. Busch is especially eloquent in his testimony as to the numbers trained by the Brothers to "contempt of the world, the purpose of a better life, the desire of religion (i.e., the religious state), discipline of morals, fear of God, dread of hell, and love of the heavenly fatherland," and then sent by them with vocations thus nurtured, not only to join the Canonical Institute, but to become bright examples of observance and zealous reformers in many monasteries of other religious orders also.

The two bodies continued thus side by side for centuries. But the Brothers of the Common Life, after doing magnificent work in art and literature, suffered much from the troubles of the Reformation period, and especially in their schools from the competition of the new Congregations of Religious which arose at that time, devoted to the work of teaching. Both

one and the other were swept out of existence by the ravaging storm of the French Revolution.

As a final instance of the primitive spirit of these Devout Brothers and Sisters, I may quote the Rule of Life drawn up for their guidance by Florence Radewyn, after the death of Gerard Groote, as given by Badius Ascensius in his “*Vita Thomae à Kempis*,” c. ix.

“All were to approach as near as possible the life of the Apostles and of the primitive Church of Christ, so that in the whole congregation there should be one heart, and that no one should consider or call anything his own. No one should seek outside the house the cure of souls, ecclesiastical benefices, or worldly occupations for the sake of gain; but clerics, who should be found worthy, would be promoted to cures that were not too lucrative. All should dwell together in chastity and poverty, and should be clad in that manner of dress which Gerard Groote had approved. No one should beg from door to door, and in order that they might not be driven to this by want, all should avoid idleness, and according to their abilities should transcribe books, or instruct children. They were to take care that they themselves, and all whom they should teach, should venerate and worship God with the deepest piety. They should love their neighbour with due charity, and should assist the poor with alms, according to their means. All should observe brotherly love. To their Superior or spiritual Father in all lawful and just concerns they should yield unquestioning obedience, considering that their highest merit consisted in charity and submission. All earnings accruing from their labour in common or in private they should, according to the apostolic rule, lay at the feet of the Superior, and if perchance they left the Brotherhood they should carry nothing with them.”

When we consider that it was to such as these that à Kempis addressed himself, we need not be surprised at the sublime spirituality pervading his sermons. In the light of these facts, the last three sermons of this volume, for instance, treating of the Holy Ghost and of the primitive Church, are clothed with fresh significance. Indeed, for a right appreciation, not only of these sermons but of all the writings of à Kempis, it is absolutely necessary to gather some knowledge of the times and characters among which he passed his peaceful days, and especially the atmosphere, intellectual and spiritual, wherein he lived, the spirit of the circle or school of Windesheim.

Happily, without seeking beyond English authors, there is abundance of excellent material for this study. We have Sir Francis Cruise's "Thomas à Kempis. Notes of a visit to the scenes in which his life was spent, with some account of the examination of his relics" (Kegan Paul and Co.). These notes form a most interesting portion of one of our best works on à Kempis and his claims to the authorship of the "Imitation." The same writer has issued two smaller works, through the London Catholic Truth Society, one on the controversy, the other on the life and character of the author of the "Imitation." We have also Rev. S. Kettlewell's "The Authorship of the 'De Imitation Christi' " (London, Rivingtons), a valuable contribution to the question. By the same author we have "Thomas à Kempis and the Brothers of the Common Life" (Kegan Paul and Co.). This work, in two large volumes, contains a mass of valuable and interesting information on the whole movement of the New Devotion; but, unfortunately, the writer has at times allowed his prejudices to lead him into strange errors, especially in the efforts which he constantly makes to reconcile the conduct and teaching of Gerard Groote and his followers with those of the sixteenth century Protestants. There is also the "Life of the Venerable Thomas à Kempis," mentioned above, compiled chiefly from the writings of à Kempis himself and his contemporaries. Finally, there are the two historical volumes of this series, translated by J. P. Arthur, "The Founders of the New Devotion," and "The Chronicles of Mt. St. Agnes."

A word now as to the method of translation I have adopted in the present and subsequent volumes. The chief object has been absolute fidelity to the thought, expression, and, as far as possible, style of the original. With this end in view, I have underlined and double-underlined the words and passages so marked by the author, as reproduced in Dr. Pohl's edition from such autograph manuscripts as are still extant. For the same reason, I have followed, as closely as the English idiom would permit, the peculiar punctuation of the author, again as faithfully rendered by his recent editor. It is well known that a certain rhythm runs through all the works of à Kempis, purposely introduced, it seems, as an aid to the memory, when books were rare in proportion to their costliness. A special system of punctuation was employed for this purpose, often having reference rather to the sound than to the sense of a passage. Besides the note of interrogation, of which the use was as with us, there were four other signs, the point, or full-stop, followed

by a capital letter, and the same followed by a small letter, the clivis, or flexa, now obsolete, and the colon. Hirsche, quoted by Dr. Pohl, vol. ii, p. 447, explains that the pause at the full-stop before a capital letter should be long, as with our point, slightly shorter at the clivis, shorter still at the colon, and very slight at the full-stop before a small letter. In Dr. Pohl's edition, and, as near as feasible, in this translation, the last-named is represented by a comma, and the clivis by a semicolon.

THE TRANSLATOR.

September, 1906.

A MEDITATION ON THE INCARNATION OF CHRIST

HERE BEGINNETH A MEDITATION ON THE INCARNATION OF CHRIST, ACCORDING TO THE TESTIMONIES OF HOLY WRIT

“SEARCH the Scriptures,” saith the Lord. O most sweet Lord Jesus, grant me Thy unworthy servant devoutly to ponder the mystery of Thy incarnation; to search wisely, to understand sublimely; what is not understood to venerate humbly: and ever to give thanks to Thee for condescension so great, and love so inestimable. For to contemplate this mystery affords me the greatest delight; and amid all Thy other wonders brings me the sweetest savour, touches me most deeply: draws me most mightily, and ravishes my whole spirit within me. Grant me then often to dwell thereon: and carefully to consider how it was foreknown and foretold by the holy prophets. Open Thou my eyes: and I will consider the wondrous things of Thy law. For Thou art the founder of the law, Thou the inspirer and teacher of the prophets: by whose utterances in wonderful and manifold ways Thou wast foretold and prefigured; now clearly, now darkly: as the whole sequence of the Old Testament when examined manifestly shows forth. For nothing therein is without mystery; but most faithful witness is there contained as well of Thy divine as of Thy human nature. And although the testimony of men is not necessary to Thee, Who art the Truth, and, at Thy pleasure, makest of men prophets; nevertheless, for our instruction and strengthening in the faith, Thou didst will these things to be foretold and written long before by Thy saints: and Thou didst will to clothe their words with such authority, that no man might dare to gainsay them in any point; so that also when Thou shouldst be present in the flesh, Thou couldst be recognized the King of Israel and Saviour of the World: Whom Holy Writ in so many places had declared to be coming. And this it is that

in person Thou didst give as answer to the doctors of the law not believing: but closely watching and cunningly tempting Thee. “Search the scriptures: for you think in them to have life everlasting. And the same are they that give testimony of Me.”

The patriarchs give witness: the prophets and the other just give witness of Thy incarnation. For Abraham, first of the patriarchs by the merit of his faith and his act of perfect obedience: received this promise, “In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.” In which seed, to wit, Thou wert designated and prophesied: Who, born of the Virgin Mary, didst truly spring from the flesh of Adam, truly from the stock of Abraham. Who also didst transmit this blessing to all the nations throughout the world, saying, “He that believeth and is baptized: shall be saved.” This blessing, I say, is not an earthly, but a heavenly promise: not transitory fruitfulness, but everlasting bliss; unending life with the angels: not temporal length of days. Which, as it was promised to faithful Abraham: so also through Thee was it given to him, and to all the followers of the true faith. For not those only, who were born of Abraham according to the flesh, are to be reckoned children of the promise: but they that follow in the footsteps of his faith are included in the blessing; whether sprung from him of the flesh: or born again of the spirit from the other nations. And therefore he is called the father of many nations, not of the Jews only: but of all them that believe in Thee throughout the universe of peoples.

A splendid witness also to Thee bears Isaac, the son of Abraham, in the things that befell him. For his birth, foretold by an angel, is a presage of Thy nativity: which however far surpasses the manner of birth of all that are born of women. He was brought forth of a barren mother through the promise of an angel: but Thou, promised from the beginning of the world, in a more ineffable fashion wast born of a virgin mother for our salvation. He in his conception gave joy to parents and friends: but Thou in Thy birth didst give great joy to angels and men. This very miracle wrought in the womb of old age makes easy of belief the child-bearing of maidenhood. Thou therefore, Who didst perform this in Thy servant, couldst certainly do more in Thyself. For seeing that Thou art the Author of nature, Thou holdest all things under Thy power: and Thou art bound by the law or right of none.

In him also is resplendent a figure of Thy Passion: when he was bidden sacrifice himself by his Father, to whom a message from God to this effect had previously been brought by an angel. He carried the wood of the sacrifice: Thou didst bear the wood of the cross, unto the wiping out of the handwriting of original sin. He is bound and speedily placed upon the altar: Thou, after Thou hast been bound and cruelly scourged, art at length lifted up upon the cross, that Thou mayest draw all things to Thyself. He was obedient to his father Abraham: and Thou didst obey Thy Father God, even to the death of the cross. He is offered, but not slain: because he was the figure, Thou the truth: he the symbol, Thou the true sacrifice. He should not die, because he was not the redeemer of the world: but Thou shouldst die, still not of Thy own, but for our crime: because, true Redeemer of the world, Thou wert born unto this, and didst receive this commandment from the Father.

The patriarch Jacob likewise bears most true testimony to Thee. He, taught by the spirit of prophecy: foretold to his children many things to come. For he made known the tribe of which Thou wert to be born, and the time wherein Thou wert to come: when, blessing his son Juda, among other things he said: "The sceptre shall not be taken from Juda," quoth he, "nor a ruler from his thigh, till He come that is to be sent: and He shall be the expectation of nations." Which testimony indeed rightly understood stands undoubtedly accomplished in Thee, Who didst most worthily spring from the tribe of Juda: and didst enter this light of the world at that epoch, when a legitimate ruler had failed in Judea: and a king of foreign race, Herod, there held princely sway. Thou art not therefore awaited, as the Jew madly raves; but Thou art believed to have already come God in the flesh: as the Christian confesses, and the Catholic faith teaches. Certainly, there is no longer a ruler in Judea, the law has ceased therein; the priesthood is silent, the temple has fallen, the kingdom is destroyed, that nation is scattered through the world: that the whole world may know, that Thou, the Saviour of Israel, the expectation of the nations and the desired thereof, hast come. The ancient law then was due to cease, after the new grace and truth shone forth with Thy coming: for all that former dispensation was a minister to give witness to Thee. With this agree the voices of the prophets: who, foreknowing Thy coming, foretold the days of grace in which we abide.

For Moses, the lawgiver and teacher of Thy people Israel, utters a most trustworthy testimony: "The Lord Thy God will raise up to thee a prophet of thy nation and of thy brethren like unto me." Moses called Thee simply a prophet addressing a rude people: who maybe was not yet found capable of grasping a more sublime title of Thee. Which also is sufficiently clear from the gospel, where, when Thou hadst worked the miracle of the five loaves and two fishes, this was the saying repeated by the people: "This is of a truth the prophet, that is to come into the world." But we, now endued with a more certain truth and a higher understanding of faith: truly confess and believe Thee not only a prophet, but the Lord also of the prophets, and the true Son of God. Nor is it strange if Thou didst speak many things darkly to that people by Thy servant Moses, and to us more things more clearly in Thy own person: for thus it befitted the order of justice, thus the law in fine and grace. This Moses then, in the longing for Thy advent, prayed and said, "I beseech Thee, Lord: send Whom Thou wilt send."

This is the Moses, who is sent into Egypt to free the children of Israel: to whom also is likewise given the power of working signs and marvels. He wrought many things and strange, which, read or heard, excite no little wonder: but, understood mystically and duly referred to Thee: convey to pious and faithful minds a higher meaning and a more saving fruit. He led forth the children of Israel from the land of Egypt: Thou didst redeem Thine from the old life, from the slavery of the devil, from the confines of hell. He, having overwhelmed Pharaoh in the Red Sea, made them enter the land of promise: Thou, having destroyed original sin by the water of baptism, makest Thy faithful enter the kingdom of the dwelling above. He on Mount Sinai received the law of the decalogue written on tables of stone, and delivered it to the people to observe: Thou, having become the mediator of the New Testament, didst preach the law of grace to the disciples on the Mount: which also by the spirit of love Thou didst deeply impress upon their minds. He wandered forty years in the desert with the children of Israel: by many signs and wonders he was glorious in their midst; Thou, three and thirty years seen upon earth and conversing with men, didst show forth so many signs of Thy divine power: that the world would scarcely be able to contain them, if they were all written. He acted as a faithful servant: Thou didst act as the Lord and the only Son of the Father: into Whose hands the Father gave all things. Therefore neither he can be compared with Thee:

nor indeed any one of angels or men. For to all the spirit is given in measure; but to Thee remaineth power ever equal with the Father: there abideth also in Thee according to Thy human nature an excellence of singular dignity far above the other saints, communicable to no creature. “For to which of the angels hath it been said at any time, ‘Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten Thee’ ”? Or which of the saints has heard the Father saying to him, “Sit thou at my right hand”? It is a great thing for an angel to be a minister: it is a great thing for any of Thy saints, to sit at table in the kingdom of Thy Father: but to Thee is given all power in Heaven and on earth. And if Thou didst appear in the substance of our mortal flesh; Thou art nevertheless above all the unchangeable God: receiving what is ours, and not losing what is Thine own. Unwaveringly therefore and boldly we confess Thee the Christ, the only-begotten of God, the Saviour of the world, and the Holy of holies promised in the law; desired by the patriarchs; foreseen and foretold by the prophets. Whose witness if a man hesitate to believe, he deprives himself of the light of truth: not keeping the base on which to set the foot of faith: nor looking to the light shining in the darksome place. For the law is a flame, and prophecy a precious lantern, leading us on to Thee the true light of the soul: in Whom they that believe are saved by faith. For without faith and the knowledge of Thy name, there is no hope of life: no gaining of salvation is possible. Thou indeed art our salvation, our hope and redemption: Whom the saints of old awaited, who had received this promise.

Moreover in many symbols, in numerous and wondrous visions also, this salvation promised of Thee existed long before and lay concealed; but, when the mystery of Thy Incarnation and Passion was fulfilled, all these hidden things were made known and accomplished. Thee therefore that paschal lamb: which was ordered to be sacrificed every year in memory of the ancient deliverance from Egypt, prefigured. Thee the offering of calves and goats, Thee the incense of sweet gums: Thee the various celebration of sacrifices, and frequent sprinkling of blood, prefigured. Thou art mystically symbolized in the golden candlestick adorned with seven lamps: Thou in the High Priest, who once a year enters the holy of holies. But all these sacrifices of the law: Thou hast fully completed by the one sacrifice of Thy body offered once upon the cross. Now therefore there is left no profit in the observance of the former things: for what they signified Thou the

eternal Truth hast made manifest to us. But they are read and, discussed according to the spirit by faithful doctors, are profitably brought forth for our edification: and their mystic meaning affords delight: but their observance in the letter is not allowed. And if formerly such sacrifices pleased Thee, this was the work of faith in a hidden mystery, which was to be made known: but now those ancient rites are ended: because the true sacrifice has now come, which with faithful devotion holy Church repeats throughout the world.

Thee also the rock springing fresh waters to the thirsty people: Thee the manna giving wondrous nourishment to the hungry: Thee the uplifted brazen serpent healing the poisoned of the bite: Thee the rod of Aaron the priest, flowering and producing nuts, beautifully foreshadowed.

Thee Joshua noble in deed and name: Thee Gideon the most victorious, Thee the most mighty Samson, Thee Samuel the most faithful prophet: Thee the illustrious virtue of each of the Nazarenes and judges wonderfully showed forth.

Thee David, the king and glorious prophet, chosen according to God's heart, and exquisite psalmist evidently sings: devoutly prays, and ardently desires saying: "Lord bow down Thy heavens and descend. Stir up Thy might and come: to save us. Show us, O Lord, Thy mercy: and grant us Thy salvation. Lord, where are Thy ancient mercies: according to what Thou didst swear to David?" With these and like supplications in the psalms he often shows the desire of his bosom: but more sublime things also than these with the eyes of the heart unveiled he declares in witness to Thee. This is the holy David: to whom Thou didst make manifest the uncertain and hidden things of Thy wisdom: and promise that Thou wouldst be made flesh of his stock. This is the David comely of form, strong of hand, prudent in counsel: wise in word, mild under insults, lowly in his looks, observant of the holy law: precentor of the Gospel, true witness of Thy coming. He has most fully prophesied of Thy birth, passion, resurrection and ascension. Thou art therefore He of Whom he said: "He hath set His tabernacle in the sun: and He is as a bridegroom coming out of His bride chamber. He hath rejoiced as a giant to run the way: His going out is from the end of Heaven: and His circuit even to the end thereof." Thou art the truth sprung out of the earth: Thou the justice looking down from Heaven: which, after the fall, reconciled us to God the Father. Thou art the beautiful above the sons of

men: in Whose lips grace is poured abroad: yea from Whom mercy and grace have flowed to all. Thou art God our king before ages: Who hast wrought salvation in the midst of the earth. Thou art the man born in Judea: Whose name abides before the ages. Thou as rain upon the fleece didst come down upon Mary: and as showers falling gently upon the earth, Thou didst sprinkle the saving doctrine of the gospel. Thou, begotten of the Father before the Day-star, and clothed in the garb of our mortality: remainest a priest for ever, appointed by God, according to the order of Melchisedech. Thou didst drink of the torrent in the way: suffering for us as a true wayfarer the unmerited passion of death. Therefore in the day of Thy resurrection Thou didst put on strength and beauty; nor after our fashion didst Thou see the corruption of the flesh: but the selfsame flesh in which Thou didst suffer, Thou didst raise to life immortal: wherewith amid rejoicing angels Thou didst ascend with jubilee: to return on the last day in the sound of the trumpet. And thus have been fulfilled the faithful songs of David: written in various passages of the psalms.

O Jesus, only desire of the prophets: Thou art the Emmanuel, Whom the virgin conceived, the virgin brought forth, after Whose birth she remained a virgin: of Whom Isaías prophesied with luminous discourse: “A child is born to us: and a son is given to us. And the government is upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called, Wonderful, Counsellor, God, the Mighty, the Father of the world to come: the Prince of Peace. His empire shall be multiplied: and there shall be no end of peace.” Thou art the root of Jesse, Who standest for an ensign of peoples; Whom the gentiles shall beseech: Whose sepulchre is seen glorious even to this day. Thou art the flower rising up out of the root of Jesse; upon Whom rests the spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the spirit of counsel and of fortitude, the spirit of knowledge and of godliness: and the spirit of the fear of the Lord. Thou art the lamb, the ruler of the earth: sent from Petra of the desert to the mount of the daughter of Sion. Thou art the mountain of the house of the Lord prepared on the top of the mountains, exalted above the hills; to Whom all the nations flow: that they may receive of Thy fullness. Thou art the light of Jerusalem, and the glory of Israel: Whose rising and brightness illumine the world. Thou art the tried stone, the precious corner stone: founded in the foundation of Sion. Thou art the bud of the Lord in magnificence, and the exalted fruit of the earth: now seated at the right hand

of God the Father: with princes and powers all subject to Thee. Thus Isaias, who in his great spirit saw the future: and comforted all the mourners of Sion with Thy coming. Whence also he says: “Be comforted, be comforted my people, saith the Lord your God: for I myself that spoke, I am here.” O with what burning desire he longed for the fulfilment of the promise of Thy incarnation: when, full of the spirit of daring, he cried out. “O that Thou wouldst rend the heavens and wouldst come down: the mountains would melt away at Thy presence.” Who, unable to cool the heat of his desire: but seeking to make it known to all, said again: “For Sion’s sake I will not hold my peace, and for the sake of Jerusalem I will not rest; till her Just One come forth as brightness: and her Saviour be lighted as a lamp.” And who can unfold all his mystic words: which he uttered concerning Thy glorious incarnation, Passion, triumph, and the expectation of the judgement, as also concerning the calling of the gentiles and the preaching of the holy Gospel? He relates the future as if it were present: he describes each detail: as if he had been an eyewitness of all. But in sooth he did see: yet with the eyes of the understanding, not of the flesh. For by spiritual eyes divine mysteries are beheld: which the animal man cannot perceive. Whence the Pharisees, who considered only outwardly the bodily presence in Thee: were unable to rise to the majesty of the divinity. But Isaias, enlightened from Heaven and uplifted: uttered truthful witness concerning both natures. For of the godhead he spoke thus: “I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne high and elevated: and all the earth was full of His glory.” But of the human nature thus: “We have seen Him: and there was no sightliness. And we have thought Him as it were a leper: and as one struck by God and afflicted. But He was wounded for our iniquities: He was bruised for our sins.”

Likewise also the most holy prophet Jeremias bears witness to Thee: when he describes the great mystery of Thy generation thus: “For the Lord,” he saith, “hath created a new thing upon the earth: a woman shall compass a man.” What thing so new, Lord Jesus, as Thy conception of the Holy Ghost, Thy birth of the virgin? This is the new thing unheard of from the ages: which has not seen its like before it, nor shall have another after it. O truly blessed novelty; by which the old wickedness was driven out: and the new holiness brought in.

Hail, new mother Mary, rejoice: thou art that blessed woman, of whom this prophecy speaks: who also hast merited to be made glad by the most

happy bringing forth of this new thing. For Him, Whom all creation doth not contain: thou, raised higher than all creatures, hast compassed in thy spotless womb. And although thou didst bear Him long enclosed within thy virginal womb, small and clothed in fragile members: nevertheless Jesus was a man even while not yet born: but in virtue not in body; by perfection of wisdom, not by measure of age: yea, full of grace and truth as soon as He was conceived. Understanding it therefore thus, we are convinced that this was the great mystery: foretold from the mouth of Jeremias.

Hence also in Baruch that memorable testimony is set: "This is our God: and there shall be no other accounted of in comparison of Him. Afterwards He was seen upon earth: and conversed with men." The prophet Ezechiel, who had witnessed many heavenly mysteries: this especially notes of Thee saying: "And upon the likeness of the throne, was a likeness as of the appearance of a man above upon it." And again: "And there was one man in the midst of them clothed with linen: with a writer's inkhorn at his reins." He touches also upon the wondrous mystery of Thy most holy birth: when from the eastern gate, he merited to hear the divine answer: "This gate shall be shut, it shall not be opened: and no man shall pass through it; because the God of Israel hath entered in by it: and it shall be shut for the prince." Thou art that prince: Mary also the shut gate: who, in conceiving and bearing, remained ever a maiden untouched.

Daniel, the man of desires and seer of sublime secrets, when he wisely explained to king Nabuchodonosor his dream: assuredly foretells Thy coming faithfully: "Thus thou sawest," saith he, "till a stone was cut out of a mountain without hands: and it struck the statue upon the feet thereof that were of iron and of clay: and it broke them in pieces. But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain: and filled the whole earth." Thou art symbolized by that stone: Who wast cut out of a mountain, to wit, out of the kingdom of the Jews, without hands: that is, formed of a virgin without the aid of a spouse. Who didst strike the statue in its feet: because even amid the wars of persecution Thou didst bow the state of worldly grandeur by words and signs to the obedience of faith. And thou hast become a great mountain and hast filled the whole earth: for Thou Who formerly wast known to but a few in Judea: afterwards by the bright light of the gospel grace hast revealed Thyself to the whole world.

Another testimony the same Daniel brings forward saying: “I beheld in the vision of the night: and lo one like the Son of man came with the clouds, and He came even to the Ancient of days: and they presented Him before Him. And He gave Him power and glory and a kingdom: and all peoples, tribes and tongues shall serve Him. His power is an everlasting power that shall not be taken away: and His kingdom, that shall not be destroyed.” What more evident than this testimony; in which both Thy advents, in the flesh, and to the judgement, are clearly declared?

Michaeas gave a testimony such: that even the Scribes and Pharisees when questioned could not pass it over in silence. For when Herod asked of them, where the Christ should be born: they replied according to the words of this prophet, in Bethlehem of Juda. For so said the same blessed prophet. “And thou Bethlehem Ephrata, art a little one among the thousands of Juda: out of thee shall He come forth unto Me that is to be the ruler in Israel. And His going forth is from the beginning, from the days of eternity.” In which words assuredly is interwoven the truth of Thy twofold birth: while one is declared an eternal going forth from the Father, the other a coming forth in time from a mother. Habacuc the prophet standeth upon the watch and fixeth his foot; that he may hear what is said to him concerning the future: and behold Thee upon the cross. “For as yet,” he saith, “the vision is far off: and it shall appear at the end, and shall not lie. If it make any delay, wait for it: for it shall surely come, and it shall not be slack.” And of Thy Passion thus: “His brightness shall be as the light: horns are in His hands. There is His strength hid: death shall go before His face. Thou wentest forth for the salvation of Thy people: for salvation with Thy Christ.” This one especially, more than the other prophets, expresses Thy most sweet name, which is above every name: speaking thus: “But I will rejoice in the Lord: and I will joy in God my Jesus.”

Sophonias weaves a prophecy of consolation: and raises to spiritual joy the mind, wearied now with long waiting: “Give praise,” he saith, “O daughter of Sion, shout, O Israel: be glad and rejoice with all thy heart, O daughter of Jerusalem. The King of Israel, the Lord, is in the midst of thee: He will save.”

Aggaeus also foretold: “Yet one little while, and I will move the heaven and the earth, and the sea and the dry land: and I will move all nations: and the desired of all nations shall come.”

Zacharias, with rejoicing heart and giving certain indications, bears witness, saying: "Sing, praise and rejoice, O daughter of Sion: for behold I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee." And again: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Sion: shout for joy, O Jerusalem. Behold thy King cometh to thee, the just and Saviour: He is poor and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass." This prophecy Thou didst then fulfil: when Thou didst approach Jerusalem seated upon the back of a lowly ass. And that no man may doubt that these things were foretold of Thee: words are added that leave no room for doubt: because the experience thereof is now possessed: "And He shall speak peace to the gentiles," saith he: "and His power shall be from sea to sea." The which it is clear was faithfully performed by the preachers of Thy holy gospel: who announced peace to them that were near, and to them that were afar. After this he turns to the Passion: showing that Thou wert to redeem the world by Thy blood: "Thou also by the blood of Thy testament hast sent forth Thy prisoners out of the pit: wherein was no water." And many other testimonies indeed the same prophet and the rest of the prophets brought forth: of which not a few are inserted in the New Testament. Nor should it move the reader to unbelief: if he hears some testimonies rendered one way in the evangelists and another in the prophets. For the evangelists assert in brief and more clearly; as formed by a more free schooling of the Holy Ghost: that which the prophets often treated in a long discourse and obscurely.

Having heard then such great attestations of the truth: do not longer disbelieve, Jew or Gentile. Confess the incarnation of Christ; foretold by the mouth of the prophets, and fulfilled. And if thou dost not trust our writings: consult thy own books, and certainly thou shalt find it so. Only put away the understanding of the flesh, and strive not with senseless effort to defend the naked letter; seek the Spirit, and turn thy heart to the mysteries of Christ: if thou wilt have a right understanding in the holy writ. Otherwise if thou boastest in the law or the prophets outside of Christ; thy glorying is empty: and blind the understanding which thou followest. Nor shall Moses profit thee: if thou hearest not Christ, of Whom Moses wrote. Nor shall the prophets avail thee, if thou acceptest not the Lord of the prophets. In vain thou seekest to be justified by the law: since even before the giving of the law many fathers were found just. By faith Noah was called just: and Abraham believing God, even before the circumcision, received the praise

of justice. Boast thee not therefore of nobility of race; nor of the virtues of thy fathers, nor of the divine words handed down to thee, full of heavenly promises: because God regards the hearts of the humble, and looks to the faith of them that rightly believe; and therefore thou shalt be glorious, and acceptable to God: if, believing in Christ, thou follow the faith and life of the early fathers. Who assuredly hoped for merit, not from the observance of the law, nor from a multitude of victims, nor from their own deeds: but from the grace of our Saviour Jesus Christ alone. For thus God promised by Isaias the prophet: “You were sold gratis: and you shall be redeemed without money.” Come back to thy senses, Jew, come back to thy senses: and be converted to the true light of the world, Jesus Christ. He is the Lord ruler and the angel of the testament: as saith Malachias. He has come to save all nations; sent especially to thee: but alack neither acknowledged nor received by many of thy children. For if thou believest that He has come, thou shalt be saved; if thou dost not believe, He shall come against thee, and thou shalt be condemned. For He saith: “If you believe not that I am He: you shall die in your sin.” What excuse wilt thou be able to offer in defence of thy error? Thou hast the law and the prophets; but as accusers rather than defenders: who shall stand in witness against thee, because thou wouldst not believe. Moses saith: “Hear ye, rebellious and incredulous. While I am yet living and going in with you, you have always been rebellious against the Lord; how much more when I shall be dead?” This obduracy abides even to this day in thee, and in thy seed. When thou art converted, God shall be propitious to thee again: even as to the other nations. Be converted, be converted to the Lord Jesus Christ, O Israel: and thou shalt no longer be a reproach among the Gentiles.

For there are two things that chiefly keep thee back in thy perfidy: love of temporal goods, and a carnal sense in the scriptures. However, lift up thy eyes round about, O Jerusalem: and see, O Israel, the number of Christ’s faithful widely spread through the whole world; and blush to be found ever in error: who by believing canst gain everlasting salvation. Let not be a stumbling block to thee the multitude of them that live carelessly, who can speedily amend by doing penance: but look rather to the example of good Christians: of whom thousands, even if hidden from the eyes of men: shall never be wanting in the Church.

But now leaving aside the crowd of the Jews, turn to Christ, O my soul: for He is thy salvation and redemption. If the Jew will not believe, do thou stand in the faith: that Jesus is the Son of God, to Whom bear witness all the prophets divinely instructed and inspired. Whom if the Jews believed, they would believe also the gospel of Christ: as He said to them: "For if you did believe Moses: you would perhaps believe Me also. For he wrote of Me." But it is not wonderful if they fail to believe Him, carnal men, going after visible things only: since the law is spiritual: and admits none but a spiritual man to its understanding. But because the Lord Jesus Christ came humble, He was not known by them: although also they read of Him in the prophets coming thus. But the wretched men struck their foot against the stumbling stone and the rock of scandal: despising the lowly, and blaspheming Him that wrought things divine. Hearing this, my soul, be thou as a most prudent bee, avoiding the evil pride of the perfidious: and ever following with lowly steps the faith of the pious. Nor let it affright thee that wickedness is of many, and piety of few: since it is the sentence of the Lord, that many are called, but few chosen. Nor is that question thy concern: for to God alone belongs this distinguishing. Turn thine eyes to thyself; and see what great things have been bestowed on thee by God: and be instant in what thanksgivings thou canst render for thy calling and enlightenment. Rejoice and exult with thy whole heart in God thy Saviour: Who, the Orient from on high, has deigned to visit thee. For it was all of grace, and a proof of extreme love: that He, Who could succour, willed to come thus. And if He had made Himself a debtor in promising; He did not thereby deprive Himself of the favour of liberality: for His gifts came without any preceding merits.

O truly great and venerable mystery hidden from the ages: promised by many foregoing witnesses, long expected, burningly desired: and at length shown to the world and faithfully bestowed. Few of the common people had understood this great sacrament of the incarnation; and almost only the prophets seem to have penetrated its inner meaning: to whom by the gift of a special revelation it was granted to know beforehand and write. For they as the chosen friends of God were allowed to enter the secret of so heavenly a design: so that they understood that the human race on account of the guilt of the first offence, had fallen into a misery such as could not otherwise be taken away except by the grace of a Mediator: by Whose incarnation and

suffering man should receive redemption. This the ears of the people, to whom all things happened in figure: could not clearly perceive. To them it was a great thing, if they received any gift of earthly promise; to the prophets nothing seemed great and joyous: except what savoured of the sweetness of eternal happiness. Whence one of the most sublime prophets, rising above all earthly things: showed what he loved more especially saying, "What have I in Heaven; and besides Thee what do I desire upon earth? Thou art the God of my heart: and the God that is my portion for ever." But this love of heavenly and hope of future things all did not possess: and where the shadow and the truth differed, many did not know; until Thou, the true peace, camest down from Heaven: and didst enter, good Jesus, into the valley of this world to enlighten men. And so it was not till after it is recorded that Thou the Word wast made flesh, and not till after Thou the Creator of man didst deign to appear among men; that what long lay secretly enclosed, began to be made clear through Thee: and what was difficult of understanding, became comprehensible; and what to many seemed incredible, by Thy saving presence Thou didst make visible: and in a certain manner, if I may so speak, palpable to the hands.

Finally some things Thou hast humbly fulfilled to the very letter: showing that they were written of Thee. But some things Thou hast not accomplished literally, but hast referred rather to the mystic sense; teaching that all the oracles of the prophets are not to be taken according to the letter: although they are always whole and entire according to the spiritual understanding. For instance, as the evangelist attests, literally that scripture was fulfilled in Thee of the paschal lamb: "You shall not break a bone thereof." But spiritually that which says, "It shall be a lamb without blemish: a male of one year." For the lamb without blemish: symbolises Thee, innocent and free from all guilt. With the plain prophecies then Thou instructest the simple unto faith: but with darker sayings Thou drawest the more acute to search deep mysteries. A plain prophecy is, "They have dug My hands and feet, they have numbered all My bones." A hidden: "I am a worm and no man." An open prophecy is, "They shall look on him whom they have pierced." A mysterious is, "Upon one stone there are seven eyes." In this way also many other testimonies are found most truly foretold of Thee: which the fallacy of the Jews shall never be able to make void. For they strove to bring false witness against Thee: and their witness was not

agreeing. Woe to thee, perfidious: who choosest rather to perish than to believe. Give assent to the words of truth: lest it be said to thee, which was said to the Sadducees carnally groping in the law and the prophets: “You err, not knowing the scriptures: nor the power of God.” For all prophecy tends to Christ: and in Christ receives fulfilment.

Nevertheless, Lord Jesus present in the flesh, Thou didst not think of the salvation only of the Jews; but also of all who were to believe in Thee, by the holy preaching of the apostles: whom Thou didst especially choose for this work. Who, although at first they were simple and unlettered men; still by Thy daily converse, and afterwards by the more generous inpouring of the Holy Ghost, as Thou didst promise them, were led into all truth: so as to grasp the fullness of the whole scripture. And their preaching is to be so much the more admired and to be given the more undoubting credit: the more truly evident it is, that they could never have wrought such wonders of themselves: unless Thy most omnipotent hand had strengthened them; seeing that it is an extremely difficult and truly divine work: to have subdued the whole world to the holy laws of the faith.

O Wisdom of God, which camest forth from the mouth of the Most High; what great things Thou hast wrought for our salvation: that Thou mightest recall us thither, whence we fell. Thou didst send before the patriarchs and prophets: to foretell us Thy coming. Then Thou didst appoint the apostles and evangelists: to teach that all things had been accomplished. O ineffable is Thy mercy, O Lord: which has been shown forth above all that can be conceived. For Thou didst diligently seek them that knew Thee not: them that forsook Thee Thou didst not forsake; them that sinned against Thee Thou didst most lovingly forgive: to them that were turned away far from Thee, Thou didst show the way of eternal salvation. If Thou hast been so kind to Thine enemies; what wilt Thou be to Thy friends? Assuredly all in all, that nothing may be wanting to them that feast with Thee and rejoice in the kingdom of Thy Father. Amen.

HERE FOLLOW TESTIMONIES FROM THE NEW TESTAMENT

BUT now from the New Testament: a few testimonies also are to be sought. All things that I read therein: without hesitation I believe to be testimonies of Thee. And not as formerly in figures and dark sayings: but with clear and plain words they declare Thee the Christ the Son of God.

This first testifies the angel Gabriel, sent to the Virgin Mary, saying, “The Holy which shall be born of thee: shall be called the Son of God.”

The angel also speaking to the shepherds witnesses: that this day is born to us a Saviour, Who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David.

Those most devout Magi also bear witness, who had come from the East to Jerusalem; whence they were directed to Bethlehem: to honour with mystic gifts Him Whom they had foreseen in the star.

This same testifies that memorable Simeon, a just man and fearing God: who was waiting for the consolation of Israel. For he, having received an answer from the Holy Ghost that he should not see death, before he had seen the Christ of the Lord: by the spirit came into the temple. Taking therefore the members of Thine infant body into His arms, but recognizing the majesty within: with giving of thanks he devoutly sang, “Now Thou dismiss Thy servant, O Lord: according to Thy word in peace.” Which canticle when he had ended: he said also to Thy venerable Mother, “Behold this child is set for the fall and for the resurrection of many in Israel: and for a sign which shall be contradicted. And thy own soul a sword shall pierce: that out of many hearts thoughts may be revealed.” O devout and sincere faith of this most blessed old man. For he adored Thee an infant: Whom the scribes and Pharisees despised working miracles. He confesses Thee true God and man: they call Thee seducer and having a devil. Wherefore he is held worthy of veneration and praise: and they are deservedly disproved as children of perdition.

The venerable John Baptist also gives witness: who was sent into the world of God to bear testimony to Thee. And he cried, saying, "After me there cometh a man, Who is preferred before me: the latchet of Whose shoe I am not worthy to loose." And seeing Thee walking amid men: but innocent of all stain of sin, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God: behold Who taketh away the sins of the world." He was a lamp bright and burning: but Thou the true light which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world. He the herald: but Thou the judge. He the lowly servant: and Thou the Lord of all. He the friend of the bridegroom: Thou the Bridegroom of the Church. He the prophet of the Most High: Thou the only-begotten Son of God, co-eternal with God the Father. He as the morning star went before Thee preparing the way: Thou as the bright sun didst follow fulfilling all justice. Who also didst send Thy blessed apostles as rays of the sun into the whole world: to preach the light of faith unto salvation to all peoples.

Thou hast still another witness greater than John. For the Father testifies from Heaven saying, "This is My beloved Son: in Whom I am well pleased." The Holy Ghost, appearing in the shape of a dove: came down and rested upon Thee. Thou, present in the flesh, didst declare to Thy most faithful friend John more fully how great Thy glory and power: so that for the greatness of the revelation then made to him, accounting rather as ignorance the former knowledge of Thee which he had received, he said, "And I knew Him not." O man most excelling in holiness, forechosen to behold the so singular and most sublime mystery of the Trinity: whose life, and death, baptism and preaching: stood forth as a most true witness of Thy coming in the flesh.

Now let the most blessed apostle Peter come, thy ardent lover and devout confessor of the truth; what he feels and how it behoves to believe in Thee: silencing the opinions of them that err, let him plainly declare: "Thou," quoth he, "art Christ the Son of the living God." O truly apostolic confession, which flesh and blood taught not: but a heavenly revelation inspired in the son of the dove. And so from the strength of his faith he merited to be called also Peter, after the rock: because leaving all things he cleaved to Thee as to a most solid rock. If one wonders that a rough fisherman was made chief of the apostolic order: let him wonder also that Moses the leader of the people and King David were first for a time shepherds of sheep. Who therefore raised Moses to a prophet, and David to

a king from following the ewes great with young: He and no other raised Peter, whilom a fisherman, to be head of the whole Church.

Now let Paul come forth, the master of the gentiles and the teacher of the world, the vessel of election, and light of the universal Church: to give witness to Thee: “When,” saith he, “the fulness of the time was come, God sent His Son made of a woman, made under the law; that He might redeem them who were under the law: that we might receive the adoption of sons.” This is that most glorious Paul: to whom from Heaven Thou didst say, “I am Jesus of Nazareth Whom Thou persecutest.” Him of a persecutor Thou didst make a preacher, of a Pharisee an apostle; bidding him bear Thy name, which before he persecuted through the whole world: nor fear to carry it before the gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. Who zealously fulfilling the office of his apostolate: and traversing divers parts of the world, sounded the gospel trumpet: and the sound of Thy name came unto the boundaries of the world: through the mouth of the most glorious Paul. Now there is not in the world a church: which is not supported by the teaching of blessed Paul, under the Catholic rule. He confounded the Jews: and utterly silenced them by the authority of holy writ: asserting that Thou art the Christ the Son of God. He converted the Gentiles, taught that their idols are nothing: subdued barbarians, refuted philosophers: and brought all together to the light of faith. This is that divine Paul, who was rapt to the secrets of the third heaven: the gospel which he preached, he learnt not of man nor by man, but by Thy revelation, Christ Jesus. And so he was able to preach it with the greater confidence, and to write of it the more gloriously: as also he did: “Great is the mystery of godliness,” he saith: “which was manifested in the flesh, was justified in the spirit, appeared unto angels; hath been preached unto the gentiles, is believed in the world: is taken up in glory.”

Let Andrew also speak, the brother of Simon Peter, the most ardent lover of the cross: one of the disciples of blessed John, but afterwards following Thee, by Whom also he was chosen as an apostle: let him, I say, speak witness unto Thee, that we may hear and believe: “We have found the Messias,” he saith, “Who is called Christ.” O simple and constant faith: to be imitated by all Christians. For having followed Thee with a simple heart, with devout confession of the mouth he at once took pains to manifest to his brother Simon: the faith which he had drawn from Thee, the source of truth.

And he brought him, namely Peter, to Jesus. For this is truly to have found Thee, to consult a brother's salvation: and to show him the way of heavenly life. Not thus the Jews: who tempting said, "If Thou be the Christ: tell us plainly." Wo to you, scribes and Pharisees: who believed in neither the signs nor the words of Christ. Andrew, a man of no letters, hearing Christ speak once: followed Him and believed. You, knowing the law and the prophets, moreover hearing the truth from the mouth of Christ: seeing also His signs and wonders such as none other wrought: did not yet believe in Him. Wherefore you shall receive the more severe judgement; and the pious simplicity of the believers shall judge you with those who said: "There is no God: and foolish are they that serve Him."

Let also speak that beloved apostle John: who at the supper reclined upon Thy breast, Lord Jesus: "In the beginning," he saith, "was the Word; and the Word was with God: and the Word was God." And further on: "And the Word was made flesh: and dwelt among us. And we saw His glory, the glory as it were of the Only-begotten of the Father: full of grace and truth." This is that disciple: who giveth testimony of these things, and hath written these things. And we know, that his testimony is true. But O most sweet John, what is the motive of this gospel narrative? "But these are written that you may believe, that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God: and that believing you may have life in His name." This is the John whom Peter often took as his companion: and who with like constancy resisted the princes and magistrates. Who even scourged by the same held not his peace: but for Thy name Jesus joyously bore insults and blows. Afterwards dispatched by the apostles with Peter, gladly he went into Samaria: prayed that they that believed might receive the Holy Ghost, and was heard. This is John, the theologian, the most enlightened seer and historian of the sublime Trinity: the pillar of the primitive Church, the ruler and founder of all Asia: who for God's word and the witness of Jesus cast into exile, there wrote the book of the Apocalypse, full of heavenly visions; manifesting in the beginning and in the end: that the spirit of his prophecy, is witness to Jesus. He in his epistles burning with divine love: interwove some most beautiful testimonies of the incarnation, saying, "Every spirit, which confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh: is of God. And every spirit that dissolveth Jesus: is not of God."

Let it please also to hear the witness of Philip: who finding Nathanael, saith to him, "We have found Him of Whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write: Jesus the son of Joseph of Nazareth." For thus Thou didst still suffer Thyself to be named and deemed: before Thou didst reveal Thyself to the world. But in truth Thou art not the son of Joseph, but the son of the intact mother, the perpetual Virgin Mary; of whom Thou wast conceived by the operation of the Holy Ghost: and created free from all stain of sin.

To this truth a more sublime testimony bears Nathanael an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile: and he said, "Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God: Thou art the King of Israel."

If also the witness of a lawyer is sought: Nicodemus is here, a prince of the Jews, saying, "Rabbi, we know, that Thou art come a teacher from God. For no man can do these signs which Thou dost: unless God be with him."

Now then weigh, O Jews, and see how many witnesses hath Christ: Whom you have not feared to deny. If you still require more, the faith of the thief will reprove you, and the confession of the centurion: of whom each acknowledged Christ; the former, as He hung upon the cross: the latter, when He expired with a great cry, who said, "Indeed this was the son of God." False therefore is your objection: which you brought against Christ saying, "Thou givest testimony of Thyself: Thy testimony is not true." For indeed witnesses are not wanting to Christ, either in the Old or in the New Testament: if you are willing to accept them. But because charity is wanting to you, and you have not the word of God abiding in you: therefore no authority is able to convince you.

What is there between me and these Jews? what part hath the faithful with the unbeliever? Not more than the fellowship that light hath to darkness. Nevertheless while their manifest error is demonstrated: our faith in Thee, Lord Jesus, is the more strongly established. Their foolish questioning is profitable to me, as a warning: but much more profitable unto truth is Thy most sweet response. Thou didst say therefore to them, "I am the light of the world; he that followeth Me, walketh not in darkness: but shall have the light of life." Willingly I listen to the prophets speaking of Thee: but more sweetly the word from Thy mouth falls upon my ear. Pleasing is the witness of the prophets: but with greater pleasure I receive the witness uttered by Thee. For if the testimony of man is received; the

testimony of God is greater, for Thou art the truth, which does not deceive: the wisdom, which knows all things. However, to strengthen our weakness Thou didst use the prophets; who were of advantage to us, not to Thee: as also Thou didst answer certain men. “This voice came not because of Me: but for your sakes.” I rejoice then, most loving Jesus, in all things that the prophets have spoken: I exult also in those which the apostles and evangelists have delivered to us. Of all whom, the faith was one, the spirit one: and the understanding in the greatest accord. For the Holy Ghost filled their hearts: that they might grasp the secret things both of the past and the future. Which when I read or hear; I embrace with all devotion: and am inflamed in the love of Thy name although an unworthy sinner. The sayings of the prophets help me: their visions and heavenly colloquies. The writings of the evangelists profit me: and the physical beholding, hearing and touch of the disciples conversing with Thee. For me they saw who were worthy: for me they heard, that were to narrate: for me they touched, that were to strengthen me in the faith.

In after times the most glorious martyrs give the strongest testimony to Thee. For these not only with the confession of the mouth; but also by the pouring out of their precious blood bore witness: whom neither the bitterness of pain, nor the softness of luxuries, could in any way turn from the true faith.

Saint Stephen, the first martyr, bears this witness. “Behold I see the heavens opened: and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.”

Blessed Laurence the martyr, when he was in torments: spake these words, “O Lord Jesus Christ, God of God, have pity on me Thy servant; for charged, I denied not Thy name: questioned I confessed Thee the Lord.”

Blessed Vincent, deacon and great-souled martyr, although he was racked in his whole body: was not however broken in spirit: but with a loud voice boldly cried. “This is the glory of the Christian name. The servant of Christ, I am ready for all things.”

Saint Ignatius, disciple of blessed John the apostle, scourged with leaden thongs, torn with hooks, and given over to living coals, rendered great witness to the faith: and how in his heart love had burned as strong as death: he showed by his fervent answer, saying, “Neither burning fire, nor boiling water: will be able to put out charity in me, Lord Jesus.” O noble martyr: whose constancy moved the Emperor Trajan to admiration: “Which of the

Greeks,” he said, “would bear as much for his god?” Ah, how greatly he is worthy to be venerated, and everywhere attended with devout heralding of praise: who amid so many species of torments, we read, never gave over calling upon Thy most sweet name, Lord Jesus. Questioned thereupon he replied, “I HAVE THIS NAME WRITTEN ON MY HEART: and therefore I CANNOT CEASE FROM NAMING IT”; and afterwards, when taken from his body, and divided through the centre: it was found to have JESUS CHRIST inscribed in letters of gold. O good Jesus how lovable and pleasant is Thy name: in the heart of them that love Thee. O how supremely necessary also is the frequent invocation of Thy honied name to me dwelling amid so many divers temptations. Deign therefore, Lord Jesus, to write Thy most sweet name as a perpetual memorial upon my heart; and enkindle it with so mighty a zeal of charity, that neither sad things nor joyous may avail to separate me from Thy love.

The venerable confessors also and doctors, in their actions and teachings, bear many praiseworthy testimonies to Thee. For these are they that set themselves as a wall for the Church: and uttered most vigorous warnings against the guiles of heretics.

Of these is the glorious Jerome priest, the noble doctor Ambrose; the most blessed prelate Augustine, the most sweet Pope Gregory: the venerable Bede, the most devout Bernard, and the others of the same kind, honourable and famous men; strong in deed, eloquent in word, catholic in faith, rich in knowledge, edifying themselves and others most numerous: and leaving their posterity a worthy monument of divine learning.

For said the glorious father Jerome: when, approaching his end, he was about to receive Holy Communion: “Thou art He, Who, although Thou wert the only God before all time and begotten of God the Father without beginning by an eternal and unsearchable generation, didst shut Thyself up made man within the small body of one maiden, that is the glorious Virgin. For thus in the virgin’s womb Thou didst assume human nature: that Thou art neither God without being man, nor man without being God. Thou art truly the life by which every creature liveth: and without which it dies. Thou art the living life sweet and lovable and pleasant. The sweetness of Thine odour refreshes the weak and ailing: whom the taste of Thee renders healthy and most strong.”

Saith the poet-orator Ambrose: "O wondrous condescension of Thy love towards us. O inestimable love of charity: to redeem the slave, Thou hast given up the Son."

Saith the most learned of doctors Augustine: "Our Redeemer and Creator, the Son of God, existing before the ages, was made the son of man at the end of time; that He, Who had created us by the power of His divinity to enjoy the blessedness of everlasting life: the same by the weakness of our humanity might restore us to recover the life which we lost." This is that sublime, contemplative Augustine; whose heart the love of Christ had so wounded, that he bore His words in his breast as sharp arrows: who in the beginning of his conversion could not be sated pondering with wondrous sweetness the sublimity of the divine plan, concerning the salvation of the human race. Whence also, inflamed with the desire of divine knowledge, while he sought above himself the immutable truth: he burst forth into this cry of exultation. "O eternal truth, both true love and loved eternity: Thou art my God: to Thee I sigh day and night."

Saith the most noble Pope Gregory: "The mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus, came among men to show a simple example of life to men: He was upright, so that He might crush the evil spirits; He feared God, so that He might overcome pride: He avoided evil, so that He might wash away uncleanness of life in His elect." The same: "O how great is the mercy of our Creator. We are not worthy slaves: and we are called friends."

Origen. "The only-begotten Son of God, Who was ineffably born of the Father alone before the ages: now at the approach of the end of time by the will of the Father and the co-operation of the Holy Ghost, came in a human body to the midst of men."

Isidore. "God seeing that the world, even when warned, would not confess its errors: sent His only begotten Son to take flesh and to appear to men: and heal sinners."

Pope Leo. "The Son of God enters these weak things of the world, coming down from the heavenly abode, and leaving not the Father's glory: in a new manner generated by a new birth. In a new manner: because invisible in His own, He was made visible in ours. The incomprehensible willed to be grasped: abiding before time, He commenced to be in time."

Maximus Bishop. "The Saviour of the world took a time of birth through His mother: Who has no time of birth from the Father. The dweller of

Heaven came to the earth: to call the inhabitants of the earth to Heaven. The Word was made flesh, not that God should be emptied into man: but that man should be glorified into God.”

Fulgentius Bishop. “Christ, the Son of God, true God of true God, and one with the Father by nature God: always nourishes the holy angels from Himself: but nevertheless the Son of God took not the nature of an angel. But that God might prove His love in us: His Son took our nature from us: and so the only begotten God, Who is the bread of the angels, that He might make Himself bread also for man: received together both the soul and the flesh of man. He received both real, both holy: both spotless. He took our soul without wickedness; He took our flesh with mortality: that dying therein, He might overcome death. He took a just soul: whereby to restore justice to our souls.”

Chrysostom. “Christ came to take upon Himself our weaknesses, and to bestow upon us His strength: to seek human things, to work divine: to accept insults, to confer dignities: to bear weariness, to restore health. He bore these necessities: that He might be proved a true man by human actions.”

Bede. “The Word was made flesh, that is, God was made man, and dwelt among us; that by the appearance of a man known to us He might be on a level with us in His daily actions, instruct us by His words, show us the way of life by His life, fight for us against the enemy: destroy our death by His death and resurrection.”

Bernard. “The only begotten of God, the sun of justice, as a taper of immense and glorious flame, was lighted to illumine the prison of this world; that every man, who wishes to be enlightened, may approach Him and be united with Him: so that there be no medium between Him and himself.”

The same. “I deem that this was the motive of the invisible God, wherefore He willed to be made visible in the flesh and converse with men; namely that HE MIGHT DRAW ALL THE AFFECTIONS OF CARNAL MEN, WHO WERE UNABLE TO LOVE EXCEPT OF THE FLESH TO THE SAVING LOVE OF HIS FLESH FIRST: and so lead them by degrees to a spiritual love.”

A most noble testimony to Thee also render Mary and Martha, sisters of Lazarus: who with single devotion cleaved to Thee living in the flesh.

This Mary is the most devout washer of Thy feet; to cleanse which she brought not exterior waters, but the tears of her own contrite heart: to wipe which she loosed her hair; to kiss which she gave her lips: to anoint which she exercised hands and arms. Indeed she turned to uses of piety everything: that formerly she had stained with the vanity of the world. O happy sorrow of this woman: which is immediately followed by the forgiveness of all her sins. For, she who had come fearful: returned in peace, free. She is more just than the Pharisee, more faithful than Simon the leper: for he doubts, she believes; he blames, she reverences and loves. He makes show of a false justice: she everywhere manifests true humility. She is Thy most pleasing and familiar friend; who after many services of kindness: also merited to be the witness, and the first messenger of Thy resurrection.

And Martha her sister, busy about much serving: renders Thee a testimony of perfect faith: "I have believed," saith she, "that Thou art Christ the Son of God Who art come into this world." This is that dear hostess of Thine, who with honour often received Thee into her home in Thy bodily presence; but within the home of her mind made ready a more pleasing dwelling-place: where Thou didst spiritually recline in the joyous concord of faith, hope and charity.

Rivalling her perfect faith also a certain woman from the crowd: with sublime voice cried: "Blessed is the womb that bore Thee: and the paps that gave Thee suck." This woman is recognized to have been possessed of great faith and devotion: who while Scribes and Pharisees blaspheme Thee, with such sincerity confesses the mystery of Thy incarnation.

Witness also to Thee bear the holy virgins: of whom Thou hast deigned to become the spouse and comforter.

Blessed Agatha, a modest maiden and noble of race, said, "My mind is strengthened: and established in Christ." This is she that went to prison for Thy name most joyously and exultantly. After the torture and the cutting away of her breasts, she sought no earthly remedy; but "I have my Lord Jesus Christ: Who by a word alone restores all things."

Lucy, a devout maiden, making ready for Thee a pleasing dwelling in her virginity: showed the great force of her faith, saying, "For three years I have sacrificed to the living God: now since nothing is left over: I shall offer myself a living victim in sacrifice to God." And when she was given over to

the fire: she subdued the power of the flame by prayer, saying, "I have asked my Lord Jesus Christ: that this fire have not power over me."

Agnes, a most blessed maiden, Thy especial and beloved spouse: bears Thee so manifest a testimony: that all that she said seems to have been not a human but a divine utterance. What this noble little virgin pronounced concerning faith and chastity, the love and beauty of her Spouse: surpasses nature and her years: "I," saith she, "love Christ, into Whose bridal-chamber I have entered: Whose mother is a virgin: Whose Father knows not woman. To Him alone I keep my troth: with all devotedness I commit myself to Him, Whom angels serve: at Whose beauty the sun and moon marvel." And she gloried, as was entirely befitting, saying, "With His ring my Lord Jesus Christ hath espoused me: and as a spouse He hath adorned me with a crown."

Cecilia, a most glorious virgin, bearing the gospel words in her breast, and desiring to please Thee only, gave her mind to no amusement or vanity: but intent upon fastings and prayer, sang in her heart, saying, "May my heart and my body be made spotless, O Lord: that I be not shamed." And questioned of her faith: with great constancy she answered, "We knowing the holy name: are utterly unable to deny it."

Likewise also the other holy virgins, Catharine, Barbara, Ursula and Christina, constant in faith, fervent in the love of Thee: treading under foot the blandishments of the flesh, loving angelic purity, overcame their sex together with the world: and merited an undying name in Heaven.

The very elements which Thou didst establish: bear witness also to Thee. It was indeed befitting, that the irrational creatures also should acknowledge their Creator: and show forth by wondrous signs Him: Whom they could not announce with words. For to Thee as to its Creator: all creation was bound to pay service. Offering therefore an obedience of unwonted strangeness: by deeds it showed beyond doubt that it knew its Lord. For the heavens knew that Thou art the Lord of the heavens: for they immediately sent forth a star as a sign of Thy birth. The earth knew: for at the voice of Thy cry it rendered up Lazarus four days dead: but also in Thy Passion it was moved and quaked. The sea knew: for it offered a solid road to Thy feet: and made a wondrous path to Thee for Peter. The air knew: for at Thy command at once it ceased from fierce gales. The sun also knew: for at the time of the Passion it withdrew the rays of its light: lest it should behold

dying Him, Whom it understood to be the author of its splendour. The rocks and stones knew: since at the same hour they were rent for compassion. The clouds knew: for they received Thee ascending into Heaven. Since therefore all these elements proclaim that their Lord and God is come in the flesh: be not thou, Oman, a rational creature, doubtful or slothful unto confessing the mystery of the incarnation of Christ, wrought chiefly for thy salvation: full of divine miracles, confirmed on all sides by scripture testimonies: lest perchance thou become more insensible than senseless things, or more stolid than the beasts of burden: as against the perfidy of the Jews, the Lord thunders by Isaias, “The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib: but Israel hath not known Me: My people hath not understood.” But now having briefly examined these things, let infinite thanks and praises be to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ: and in Thy name let every knee bow of those that are in Heaven, on earth, and under the earth: and let every tongue confess, that Thou art in the glory of God the Father.

HERE ENDETH THE MEDITATION ON THE INCARNATION OF CHRIST ACCORDING TO THE TESTIMONIES OF HOLY WRIT OF THE OLD AND THE NEW TESTAMENT.

A PRAYER TO GREET OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

HAIL, Lord Jesus Christ, King of the holy angels, Whom all the powers of Heaven obey, Whom the cherubim and seraphim adore, praise, and bless for ever and ever.

Hail, Lord Jesus Christ, true Messiah and Saint of saints, sent from the citadel of the Father into this world, Whom all the holy ones from the beginning awaited, Whom the Patriarchs with great longing desired to behold, Whose coming the prophets with divers heraldings chanted. Hail, Lord Jesus Christ, Creator and Redeemer of the human race, Whom the apostles and evangelists preached to the world, and taught to be the true Son of God incarnate for us, slain and risen from the dead; and, resplendent with glorious signs and wonders, they planted the holy Church throughout the world. Hail, Lord Jesus Christ, most mighty warrior, and most faithful helper of the saints, Whom the noble martyrs, despising the pleasures of this world, despising also the sufferings of their own body, have followed in the agony of the blessed Passion, and for the witness of faith with constancy have given themselves up to death. Hail, Lord Jesus Christ, supreme priest and true Pontiff, and eternal shepherd, Whom priests and levites, doctors and confessors have glorified by their life, knowledge and virtues, Whom monks and hermits, going through a hard and straitened life, have loved with whole-souled devotedness. Hail, Lord Jesus Christ, Spouse of virgins, comfort of widows, hope of orphans, refuge of the destitute, relief of the sorrowful, eternal salvation of believers, and most wide gate to all them that come to Thee, Whom with a special beauty of chastity an innumerable band of virgins follow, bearing the spotless halo of their integrity. Hail, Lord Jesus Christ, light of the world, fount of life, paradise of the soul, joy of the heart, giver of grace, restorer of innocence, in Whom are hidden all the treasures of the wisdom and knowledge of God, Whom to know is to live,

Whom to serve is to reign, Whom once to have seen is to have learnt all things, on Whom the angels long to gaze, and are sated gazing with ever fresh desire. To Thee be praise, to Thee glory, to Thee giving of thanks, with the Father and the Holy Ghost for ever and ever. Amen.

A PRAYER TO CHRIST, WHO IS THE TRUE LIGHT, WAY, TRUTH AND LIFE

LORD JESUS CHRIST, true light, eternal and unchangeable, Who to enlighten the darkness of man's ignorance, didst deign to come down into the prison of this world, to show us the way to the fatherland of everlasting brightness, where with the holy angels Thou art ever present and givest light unfailingly, listen to the prayers of my lowliness, and pour into my heart with gracious generosity that godly light, which Thou didst preach to the world, and command to be preached to all nations through the earth, that I may know Thy way in the land of my pilgrimage, so that leaving the vanity of the world and casting aside the cares of the flesh I may follow Thee my Creator and Redeemer with the steps of love unto the end of my life in all poverty and humility, in patience and longsuffering, in faith, hope and charity, in sobriety, in chastity and perfect obedience. For Thou art the mirror of life and the light of all holiness, Who didst go before me in the way of virtue, that Thou mightest bring me back to the knowledge of truth, enveloped as I was in many errors and sins. Thou didst set Thyself before me as an example of living, so that if I wearied of following any one of Thy saints, at least I might not be slothful to follow Thee my God. And that I might not deem this impossible, Thou didst leave me many thousand examples of saints, who have eagerly followed Thy footsteps.

Give me therefore, most loving Jesus, the fervour of Thy spirit, enkindle in me the fire which Thou camest to send upon earth, that I may despise all these lower things, and desire to live to Thee alone, study to please Thee only, and for Thy love fear not to be contemned and neglected by men. Be Thou my joy, the sweetness of my soul, live with me and I with Thee, shutting out the whole world. Be my teacher and my master, my learning and my wisdom. Following Thee I cannot go astray; looking upon Thee, I will make no account of the words of them that would draw me back. May

every toil for Thee seem small to me, every misfortune light, may every burden become bearable. May Thy love work this for me, which helpeth to overcome all things, may also humility of heart follow, which, accomplishing all, deems that it has done nothing worthy. Thou art my expectation and the fulfilment of my desire, Thou my recreation and the enlightenment of my heart, Who never forsakest them that hope in Thee, although Thou suffer them to be tempted for a while, that they may know themselves better and be mindful that without Thee they can do nothing. O only beloved Jesus, abandon me not without consolation in the exile of this world, but do with me as Thou hast said and promised, to go and come again to me in due time, until, when the strife of the trial is over, Thou takest me to Thyself into eternal glory. In which Thou livest and reignest God for all ages of ages. Amen.

SERMONS OF THE LIFE AND PASSION
OF OUR LORD, TO WIT, FROM THE
ADVENT OF OUR LORD

I

OF THE DESIRE OF THE PROPHETS AND OF DEVOUT PREPARATION FOR THE COMING OF CHRIST

BEHOLD the desired of all nations shall come. Give heed and listen, all ye faithful and devout: to what the books of the prophets say of Christ. For it is becoming now in the so holy time of the Lord's Advent: to call to mind more particularly the prophecies that concern the incarnation of Jesus Christ. For therefore are the writings of the holy prophets concerning Christ daily cited to us in public: namely that hearing the voice of the fathers who have gone before, the whole affection of our heart may be more and more enkindled in the love of the Word Incarnate. O with what desire the holy patriarchs and prophets burned of old: concerning only the promise of what was to come. It is matter of great shame to us, if now we are inflamed with less desire towards the presence of Christ shown us in the flesh: when they were so ardent towards the memory only of the Word to be made flesh. Abraham, the father of all the faithful, rejoiced that he might see the day of Christ, Who, as he had foreseen in the spirit, would be born of his stock, and he rejoiced with no little joy: because of the certain hope which he had received of the Christ to be born. And so also frequently desired the same many other saints of old, who foreknew this by the spirit; longing for the speedy fulfilment of so great a mystery: while we now rejoice that it is accomplished. Which the Lord showed clearly enough: when present in the flesh He said to His disciples, "Many kings and prophets have desired to see the things that you see: and have not seen them." Little love therefore he seems to have towards Christ, whoever does not reflect, in the love of his

soul, how divine a mystery it is, how great a gift bestowed on man: that Christ willed to be made flesh. However the loving Lord is wont freely to bestow the grace of devotion ON THEM THAT MEDITATE UPON HIM, WHO CAME INTO THIS WORLD TO GIVE BLESSING: FOR CHRIST IS NOT WITHOUT UNCTION: NOR IS JESUS CONTEMPLATED WITHOUT SWEETNESS. Nor can it be doubted that much far-reaching, vast and beautiful matter of holy meditation occurs to earnest minds, which is hidden and remote for the slothful and careless: because they are not worthy to understand the mysteries of Christ: who do not seek them with humility and desire. Hence He Himself saith to the disciples, “To you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but to the rest in parables.”

But the love of Jesus mightily draws His lovers to ruminate on the honied words that flow from His mouth, and to ponder His divine works wrought in the flesh: to weigh which worthily, no times or moments suffice. To such it is customary in whatever their needs and concerns to have recourse to their most beloved friend and consoler, Jesus; because He is the source of all graces and virtues: Who by a mere word and one only nod is able to reform all that is ill-ordered. And in divers ways they receive comfort from Him; and sometimes they merit very great illuminings of mind: who thus devoutly and HUMBLY fly to Him. And the more intimately they turn themselves towards Him: so much the more sublime raptures of spirit do they enjoy, when visited by Him. Great pains therefore should be taken on these days of devotion, and some wholesome thought from the law or the prophets should be constantly turned over in the heart: concerning the desire of the ancient fathers, concerning the depth of the heavenly mysteries, concerning the revelation of the things to come: but more fully concerning the accomplishment of all the promises.

Frequently also and earnestly must we pray, that our affection may be drawn inwardly to Christ: and the understanding of spiritual things be opened to us with the prophets. For thus shall we be able to make progress in the knowledge, and increase more fully in the virtues of the Son of God: Who for our salvation deigned to be made man. What excuse wilt thou be able to offer, my soul; if thou neglectest to ponder so great a grace? What, I say, wilt thou answer Christ in the time to come; if thou hast not been grateful for the so great benefits, wherewith He has honoured thee in

preference to so many peoples and tongues. For how many there have been who have not known Christ: and have not heard of Him, how many also who have despised Him and refused to believe. But to thee it has been given not only to believe and hear: but also to read and understand what things have been written and prophesied concerning Christ. Be thankful therefore to God for the bestowal of such blessings: and diligent in the study of the works of God. Without doubt all is full of spirit and truth; all full of love and sweetness: whatever is written or chanted concerning Christ. There is no lack of matter to exercise devotion: nor of time for sacred meditation. For the books are open, and the discourses of the saints numerous: and all things have been well arranged by the fathers in the celebration of the divine offices. What cause therefore hast thou to say, I am not able to meditate well; seeing that so much has been prepared for the consolation of all the faithful? This winter time also is fully suitable for the exercise of devotion: and for acquiring union with the Lord. For though it be cold: still the fire of internal love cannot be hindered, or extinguished. But the nights also longer than wont, give opportunity for longer praying and chanting: so also the bitterness of the storms, the violence and cold of the winds take away occasion of wandering abroad. For all things appear now to say: let each abide with himself: and busy himself only with Jesus day and night. Let no man therefore go outside the door of his tent, for the season does not suffer: but let him observe the sabbath of the soul: and prepare within himself for the Lord the place of a most beautiful dwelling. For the more the outward senses are restrained and collected; so much the more the spirit is free within: and capable of contemplating things divine. And now there seems to remain nothing more, save the grace and power of the Holy Ghost: without which our life is utterly poor: and all man's diligence of no avail. But if it be present, it quickly bears away to higher things: and suffices the lover, even if he knows not letters. To him however that knows letters, the Spirit is necessary: for without the spirit the letter is void: as also all prayers are lacking in savour.

Strive therefore after greater devotion in the so holy time of the Advent of the Lord. But especially from that day on which is chanted "O sapientia," on the feast of the blessed Lucy, virgin: then the heart and soul are to be raised with greater affection towards Christ: for He it is Whom holy mother Church desires to come. For this exclamation betokens the unbounded

desire of the holy prophets: as also the affection of every faithful soul longing for the coming of Christ. As if amid her ardent prayers she were to say, “O good most loving Jesus, true and eternal wisdom of the Father, Who didst wonderfully create us: come now and, as Thou hast ordained, even more wonderfully save us, fallen. Come to visit us in the prison of flesh, being born free from the malady of the flesh; that Thy elect may be delivered, whom the weight of sin burdens: and the fear of death heavily oppresses. Come to enlighten the darkness of the world, and purify darkened consciences; so that freed from the chains of sin, we may rejoice in Thy compassion: and raised by Thy grace, be comforted by the hope of good things eternal. Through Thee, Christ Jesus, true light of the soul: born of the Father before the ages. Amen.”

II

OF MEETING AND WELCOMING THE HEAVENLY KING

TELL ye the daughter of Sion: behold thy King cometh to thee, meek. Of old God, speaking to the fathers and prophets, sent before many witnesses of His incarnation: and now in almost the same words He proclaims the time of His coming to every faithful soul. “Tell ye,” He saith, “the daughter of Sion,” ye that are spiritual and have the spirit of prophecy; or ye that have read the prophets and know the scriptures: tell ye, I say, the soul awaiting and much desiring My coming; to open the eyes of her faith: and know that I am immediately at hand. For I seek such a soul that longs to see Me: and frequently thinks of Me. Her I bid and bid again to slumber not for weariness: but to awake, arise and await. Let her then also pray and read My letters addressed to her from Heaven: let her look into them often: and until I come refresh herself in them, and comfort herself manfully; nor desist from praying and desiring: for I will surely come and I will not be slack. I lengthened out a truly long period of delay, I willed not to come hastily: but I made go before many and magnificent heralds; often by them I sent word and message in order to arouse desire, and increase the rejoicing over My advent. For when a great monarch approaches any place: he should be received with great eagerness.

“Who therefore eagerly desires Me: he shall the more rejoice in My presence when I come. But who is given over to the world: he cannot desire Me. Who again despises all worldly consolation, and, fleeing from distractions of the heart, recollects himself interiorly, desiring eternal things, rejecting present: he prays to hasten the day of My visitation and the hour of the coming of the Saint of saints, the glorious presence also of the

heavenly King, saying, ‘Come, Lord, visit me in peace: that I may joy before Thee with a perfect heart. Come, desire of my heart: light of my eyes and peace. Thou art my hope, the expectation of Israel. In Thee have I hoped, shame me not of my hope: because unto Thee with desire have I lifted up my soul.’ To such a soul desiring thus, and seeking Me from day to day I will speedily appear: and make Myself manifest. For I am the Lord her God: Who have spoken in the prophets. And even till now I speak to all: but nevertheless in a special manner to my faithful friends; and in a very special manner to him who beyond others more eagerly longs for Me: and more reverently desires to receive Me and bring Me into his house. And now I am nigh, saith the Lord; now My time is accomplished: I will not longer delay. I will fulfil the word which I have spoken; I will make good my promise: I will not put off the desire of the soul; what she hath sought shall be, what she hath desired shall come to pass: for I Myself Who speak, behold I am here.” Rejoice and be glad, faithful soul: for the King cometh to thee from Heaven. He is the Lord thy God, thy Creator and Redeemer; long awaited, ardently desired: and now ready to come to thee. “Fear not, daughter of Sion: behold thy King cometh.” Behold the Heaven, whence He cometh forth: behold the world, into which He entereth.

Behold a law of fire in His right hand: in His left riches and glory. Behold round about Him angels and archangels; before Him prophets, near Him apostles: after Him innumerable choirs of saints.

Behold how great is He Who enters: Whom the dominations haste to meet: and all the powers of Heaven serve. Behold He cometh, a compassionate and mild, poor and HUMBLE KING in human nature: Who is to judge the world in justice. BLESSED THE EYES THAT SEE THESE THINGS, and PONDER on the works of the eternal King TO THEIR OWN EDIFICATION; for THEREIN THEY SHALL NOT SEE THE POMP OF THE WORLD: but all humility and meekness shall they find in the coming of so great a King. Blessed all who have eyes of spiritual understanding: and in the light of faith see the light of eternal Truth. This visible world is seen with the eyes of the flesh even by infidels and pagans; but the invisible CREATOR of the world Himself is beheld with the eyes of the mind by ALL the faithful of Christ: WHO LOVE CHRIST FROM THEIR INMOST HEART. For TO BELIEVE in Christ, IS TO BEHOLD HIM WITH THE MIND, and ARDENTLY TO LOVE HIM, IS TO POSSESS HIM. For thus

the holy patriarchs and ancient prophets saw him; who foretold His advent long before: and prophesied many things concerning Him.

For the prophets of old were named seers: because Whom others knew not they foresaw: and by their words and writings strove to make known to others who knew not. Thus likewise we also see Christ, who after His incarnation have come to the faith; because all things that we read or hear of Him, we firmly hold in our soul: and confess, praise and proclaim truly foretold by the prophets, and mightily confirmed by the apostles. Blessed therefore the eyes of those who, although they have not seen Christ in the flesh, nevertheless faithfully believe in Him; devoutly venerate, chastely love: and ardently desire to receive Him.

Behold our King comes from Heaven; let us joyously go forth to meet Him: and welcome Him with devout embraces. Let the heavens rejoice, to wit, sublime contemplatives; let the earth exult, to wit, simple ones given to the active life, before the face of the Lord because He cometh: for He comes to save us and to give Himself to us. SHOUT PRAISE, YE MOUNTAINS; and ye learned, distil THE SWEETNESS of the word: and let the hills flow WITH MILK AND HONEY UNTO THE SPIRITUAL COMFORT OF US ALL. Give voice on the trumpet in Sion: let all the torpid be aroused, all the dispersed gathered together into one; let the weak be strengthened, the sad comforted, the sick raised: let all assemble, let each hasten from his place; for a great day in Israel: the holy day of the Lord, the feast day of the eternal King hath arrived. Rejoice, Jerusalem, and make a gathering, all ye faithful that love Jesus Christ, the joy of all that love Him; for He shall not appear in tumult, nor in outward pomp: but in the spirit of gentleness and mildness you shall see Him from within. Let all peoples, tribes and tongues then rejoice and prepare: but do thou, devout soul, daughter of Sion, whose whole aim is fixed upon God, do thou, I say, exult the more. For to thee through the prophet is word sent by the Lord, to thee especially is the message given; thou art called AS A FRIEND BY NAME: that thou mayest hear and see what manner of one is He Who is about to come to thee. Behold thy King, He cometh to thee. Behold thy King: not earthly, not of time, not mortal: but heavenly, eternal, and immortal. Behold He cometh, not to reign in the world; but to save the world: by His blood. Behold thy King, not the king of Romans or Franks: but the King of kings and the Lord of all lords. By Him kings reign in the world: and without Him

none shall be crowned in Heaven. He is the King of Heaven: and He cometh not to receive the earth: but to give the kingdom of Heaven. Who is willing to serve Him, him He shall make to reign with Him; and whosoever neglects to obey Him: shall be shut out from His Kingdom. Behold thy King, Whom thou desirest, Whom thou lovest: in Whom thou believest, in Whom thou hopest. He is indeed in general King to all creatures; but to thee in particular by love: as thy own spouse and familiar friend. Thine I say; because for thee He is more fully occupied with care, for thee more watchfully intent; towards thee more lovingly inclined, with thee more closely united: so that thou canst say in truth: “My King and my God.” For from eternity He has loved thee: and now to deliver and save thee, He has come from Heaven from the Royal dwellings. IN WHOM IF THOU WILT GLORY: I KNOW NOT HOW THOU CANST BE SADDENED OR DISCOURAGED. For He is the King and Ruler of all: and what things He hath made with power, He governs with the utmost wisdom: so that deservedly He should be named King and Lord of all: and nevertheless thine by the special favour of His gifts. On Him depend Heaven and earth: and all creation is ruled by His sway. None can resist His power: by His wisdom all things are ordered. His wisdom and power are with Him; and He made all things: and there is no end of His greatness. O how high and immense is He beyond all kings and princes: of Whom the prophet says in the psalm, “But God is our King before ages: He hath wrought salvation in the midst of the earth.” Behold He cometh. He cometh not in gold and silver, nor clothed in purple and fine linen; not in caparisoned horses, nor resplendent arms, not in the blare of the bugle and lute: but in lowliness and poverty, in mildness and charity: that He may be loved rather than feared: that He may draw sinners to Him, not drive them away.

But wherefore did He come? He came for His exceeding charity wherewith He loved us: that He might redeem whom He knew to be lost. He came because of thy need and faultiness: which was exceedingly manifold and great. He came to free thee from sins: and to cleanse by the outpouring of His precious blood. He came to enlighten thy ignorance: and to show the way of truth. He came to aid thy weakness: and to teach endurance in adversity. He came to call away from desire of earthly things: and to raise to love of heavenly. He came to preach virtue: and to put an end to vice. He came to pour in grace: and to make glad with the sweetness of

heavenly consolations. HE CAME TO FILL THEE WITH ALL GOOD THINGS: AND TO DELIVER THEE FROM ALL EVILS. He came to bestow on thee everlasting bliss: and to bear the misery of time for thee. He came to give thee all that is His: and above all gifts to offer Himself to thee to be enjoyed for ever.

For that thou mightest eternally rejoice: He Himself came to accept toil and sorrow. That thou mightest be made rich: He came to be made poor. That thou mightest reign: He came to live in exile. He came, the way to the wanderer; truth to the ignorant, life to the dead: light to the blind, the physician to the sick; the comforter to the desolate, the deliverer to the condemned: the counsellor to the seduced, the saviour to the despairing. Behold wherefore He came: and how much He brought thee by His saving coming. He sent not an angel, nor archangel, nor patriarch, nor prophet; but He came Himself, the King of angels, and the Lord of prophets, to deliver thee: for He is the Lord thy God Who made thee. And indeed all the kings and prophets, who were before Him, could not free anyone from the hand of death, nor bring to eternal life; but this King, most powerful and glorious for ever, shall deliver His people from the hand of death: destroy the chains of hell, and lead His elect into paradise.

O if thou wouldst well understand and carefully observe of what and how great majesty is this King of glory: thou wouldst certainly lift up the gates of thy heart most lovingly, and bring in to thee the King of everlasting glory: for with greatest exultation, with immense honour and solemn preparation it is befitting to receive such and so great a King. For if any earthly king had sent word to thee, or one of his princes, "Tomorrow I will come to thee, prepare me a chamber, I wish to make a stay with thee"; what care wouldst thou have, dost thou think, and what wonder thou wouldst express? Behold now the King of Heaven, speaking by the prophet, sends word to thee, "Be prepared to meet thy God, O Israel: for I will come and I will dwell in the midst of thee." Therefore to receive this guest, adorn the chamber of thy heart; for He desires not only to come to thee, but also to dwell in thee: and as in a bridal chamber sweetly to repose. Happy the soul that merits the coming into herself of this so great a guest: and Him Whom all creation does not fitly hold, SHE WITH LOVING DESIRES DRAWS INTO THE MOST HIDDEN RECESS; that she may the more blissfully rest within: the less she delights in aught without. Happy indeed, to whom

deigns to come the most High King of Heaven, the Lord of kings: not to judge or terrify: but lovingly to visit and console her as one well-known and dear to Him. For the gentle King comes to visit and comfort all them that mourn in Sion: to give peace to them that dwell on earth: to put off severe judgement, to exercise mercy: to grant pardon to sinners, to receive the penitent, to deny grace to none: and finally to bestow everlasting glory on all them that await Him unto salvation. Amen.

III

ON CHRISTMAS DAY. OF THE FEASTS OF THE SOUL

THE light is come into the world. Aid me, I almighty Father, that according to the desire of my heart, as I meditate I on the solemnity of to-day's festival of Thy most beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, some sweet and devout matter may come to me to bestir my sloth to devotion and giving of thanks. Enlighten my heart with the invisible light of Thy wisdom; Who didst make this most sacred night to shine with the dawn of the true light: and hast ordained that this day be solemnized with festive joys.

For nothing shall be pleasant or joyous to me: unless Thou Thyself first enlighten my mind; so that at rest from all disturbance of vice: it may be rapt in the contemplation of so great a celebration.

Happy festival on which both joy of mind is felt: and the soul invited by Thee is plentifully refreshed with spiritual banquets. For it is no feast to me: save it be in the heart. But indeed it is often celebrated outwardly on that account: that it may be the more joyously and gratefully solemnized within. For outward festivities are an encouragement to internal feasting: and a certain presage of eternal joys.

When therefore my interior man concords well and rejoices with the outward festivity; I seem to have now not a single but a double feast: for what is wrought without, is the more holily possessed within. It is also a double major feast: it is even a solemn. Which things the spiritual and devout soul better understands: that is wont to celebrate such feasts in spirit and in truth. FOR THE SPIRITUAL MAN JUDGES ALL THINGS. And how much one feast of the heart differs from another, and excels by a particular gladness: she, to whom Jesus deigns to come and TO

MANIFEST HIMSELF ON THE FESTIVAL, knows well, taught by sweet experience. For He it is of Whom the chief festivals are solemnized: and happy she to whom He comes, and allows Himself to be seen with joy. But I think that the soul is not always drawn to God with one and the same affection of devotion, nor always visited by her Beloved in the same manner. And so, according to the lesser and the more sublime visitations, the diversity of festivals may not inaptly be distinguished; so that now it is a double feast in the soul: when according to the prophet David heart and flesh together rejoice in the living God; when so great a joy is felt poured into the heart, that it is necessary to express the same by exterior voice and gesture: and it becomes delightful to praise God devoutly in hymns and canticles. But then a double major is kept; when so great is the inebriation of the interior man, and the gladness of the exterior sensitive man: that human weakness for the heat of love cannot contain and endure it: but neither by any symbols or words can be expressed: what things the soul, visited by God, experiences wrought within her on such a feast. THEY ARE RATHER TO BE CONCEALED BY SILENCE: if ever any such are granted of God to be experienced.

But she secretly discourses of these things with God alone: Who understands her better in her silence and without words. FOR THEN IT BEHOVES EVERY CREATURE TO BE SILENT: WHEN GOD SPEAKS to a soul above natural understanding. AND THEN IS SHE BEST INSTRUCTED: WHEN THUS HER SPEECH IS WITH GOD ALONE. O teacher, truth: how speedily and perfectly is he imbued, to whom Thou dost manifest Thyself. On this feast the altar pieces are uncovered and the relics of the saints are exposed: for to this loving soul the hidden things of scripture are revealed: and the secrets of the heavenly fatherland, the state of the saints, and the eternal rewards are made known by way of special consolation.

O great and happy feast: whose celebration is granted not to all, but to a few. How far are these holy solemnities from the lovers of the world; who relish only earthly things: and look to outward things alone. To them appears foolish, and almost nothing: whatever is not resplendent with outward glitter. They usually wonder how the good can take leisure in God, and abstain from the pleasures of the flesh; for they know not how great comfort the spirit possesses within, and these experience: who for the love

of God renounce all worldly delights. But such men live in ignorance and error: as pursue and love only visible things.

But when is a solemn festival of the soul celebrated? Would there were one to tell me and make me understand: if, however, that can be told which is so sublime and secret: as to be far removed from all previous standard. If ever then the soul resting in rapture of mind, FORGETFUL OF ALL THINGS PRESENT AND LIKEWISE OF HERSELF, abide mindful of God alone, and freed from all corporeal imagery pass into the abyss of the divine light, looking upon eternal things; what man would deny that she is celebrating a solemn feast, who, illumined by the rays of the eternal sun, stands so admirably raised above all things created? All this, however, seems to belong rather to the glory of eternal blessedness: than to the wretchedness of the present life. We possess therefore now rather the name and commemoration of a solemn feast than the real experience: because its perfect brightness is reserved for the saints in Heaven. O festival of festivals: where men and angels gathered together praise God three and one. O how solemnly they chant there, how sweetly they praise; where they have always present: clearly see, and joyously contemplate God. Indeed, from the thought of that rejoicing and perpetual solemnity of Heaven: I find all joyous festivity of the present time become discordant. Therefore towards that solemn and eternal festival, which for its greatness can neither be conceived nor expressed; the whole affection of our devotion should vehemently aspire and be incited: as often as feasts are solemnly celebrated on earth. Whence all our feasts are as it were prefaces to that eternal festivity: rather than to be named true festivals. Here, however, they commence in the light of faith: but there they are all perfected in the light of glory. For there is the praise of the angels, and the most sweet harmony of the holy souls: there in the Creator's presence all rejoice in unison. But with us it is well: if at any time it is granted to experience a little thereof. Who would not be glad to be present among the hymning choirs of angels; where there is no discord of voices, no relaxing frivolity, no harassing occupation, no pressing need, no corrupting affection, no distracting imagination: no subject of disturbance, no occasion of temptation, no carelessness, no disorder, no toil, no weariness, no fatigue: but sovereign peace and tranquillity, supreme joy and honied sweetness, absolute concord and deifying brightness, full bliss and perfect security? O how brief and trifling

is that which here we celebrate: how imperfect and wanting in splendour that which here we solemnize. For as long as we suffer the darkness of our own corruption, as long as we bear a mortal body: we scarcely grasp clearly anything of the light and the boundless spirit of immortality. For our celebration endures barely one night and day: **SINCE OUR WEAKNESS CANNOT LONG PERSIST IN DEVOTION.** And would that a greater part of the time were spent in spiritual melodies: and less were given to outward celebrations. If the truth be considered, it is clearly evident, that our festivals here are imperfect, however sublime our chant or music; however much interiorly we rejoice or praise: for speedily the present joy is lessened by divers hindrances. However this is not very wonderful, seeing that we are strangers and pilgrims upon earth; and that the whole time of our journeying is suited rather to struggle than to rejoicing: and that the celebration of feasts belongs rather to the citizens of Heaven than to the exile sons of Eve. But lest we be cast down and harassed by our miseries, and become forgetful of the divine blessings: the eternal wisdom of God has provided, and holy mother Church has ordained; that in the desire of the soul each year the festivals of Christ and His saints be solemnized: in order that devotion may be aroused, faith strengthened, charity increased. For so much the more devoutly does one celebrate the feasts, and the more worthily honour God in His saints: the more he makes progress in the spirit, and the more utterly he gives himself to the love of eternity. For therefore came the Light into the world to show us the way to Heaven: to enkindle our heart to the love of Itself, and draw us away from all earthly things; to give us the light of wisdom, and chase away the darkness of ignorance: to make us together with Itself sharers of the kingdom, children of grace, and coheirs of eternal glory. O glorious Light born of the Father: O bright Wisdom of God, brought forth of a virgin this night: grant me devoutly and worthily to tender Thee thanks; grant me to sing aloud to Thy name, reverently bow, humbly kneel, worshipfully adore: and with the holy angels solemnly to chant to Thee, "Glory in the highest." For praise and honour befit Thee, O Lord; Who didst deign to be incarnate for our salvation. Amen.

IV

ON CHRISTMAS NIGHT. OF SEEKING THE INFANT JESUS

SEEK ye the Lord, while He may be found; call on Him, while He is near. Arise, all ye faithful of Christ: hasten together to this solemnity of the birth of the Lord. For this is the most holy night: on which the Redeemer of the world, Jesus Christ, willed to be born of the glorious Virgin Mary. Arise, therefore, all, and watch: prepare ye your hearts and pray. The Lord is come: come and adore. Seek Jesus, and you shall find Him: knock at the door, and it shall be opened to you: enter the house and you shall see. Our King is arrived: Christ is born to us. Come, let us adore and fall down before Him: for He it is Who made us. Come, ye angels and archangels: chant and rejoice and sing psalms. Be glad, ye just in the Lord; sing a hymn to our God: proclaim His works among the nations. God is come in the flesh; He is with us in human nature: Who is never away from us in the divine. Come, little and great: old and aged, youths and maidens; sing to the Lord a new canticle: for he hath wrought wonders this day. LIFT UP YOUR HEARTS WITH YOUR HANDS TO HEAVEN; AND ABOVE ALL REJOICING GIVE GLORY TO HIS PRAISE. The Lord is with us: be not sad. Put on, ye chosen ones of God, the garments of gladness and joy; cast away the works of darkness, and put ye on the armour of light: as in the open day, so let us watch this sacred night. Let us rejoice and exult; let us sing canticles and hymns: let us praise the God our Saviour. Let us offer Him our vows: let us present Him the service of our mouth. The Lord is with us, depart not: weary not; but stand manfully; and sing psalms to Him with cheerfulness.

Who can sleep now; while the angels are singing in the heavens, and the voice of praise resounds on high? Who would remain in his bed; while all rejoice to be with Jesus in gladness? Who would not rise this night with eagerness; when all things seem to be rejoicing? Therefore be glad and rejoice, daughter of Sion, give praise, O Jerusalem: for this day true peace has come down from Heaven, to appease and restore the things that are in Heaven and the things that are on earth. This day the true Light has shone upon the earth: to enlighten every man that believeth in Him. This day there is great joy in Israel: for Christ is born in Bethlehem. This day throughout the world the heavens are flowing with honey; for from the mouth of the learned come forth most sweet discourses: whereby the weak are refreshed, the devout consoled; the ignorant instructed, the slothful aroused: the faithful strengthened, and unbelievers put to shame.

To-day the angels rejoice, the archangels exult: and all the just are in devotion and spiritual joy. To-day night is turned into day and great brightness: for to the righteous of heart a light is risen up in darkness, the merciful and compassionate Lord. Let this night be blessed for ever: and numbered among the days of solemnity. Let them bless it who are wont to bless the day; and praise it all the children of light: for therein is born Christ the Son of God, the Light of eternal light. Let it not be dark; but let it be illumined by a light from above: and throughout the whole Church let many lamps be lighted. Let nothing therein be passed over that concerns its beauty: but let its praise be continued even to the breaking of the rising dawn. And when the day shall have dawned: may the Sun of Justice, Who is born, shine in the hearts of all them that love Him: and may fresh devotion again rise in the hearts of all that celebrate. A holy day has shone upon us to-day: let all the faithful rejoice: for God bespoke of old: "Be light made": and light was made. O truly blessed night, brightened by the birth of the true Light, and made resplendent with the glory of angels: by whose hymns and praises it is rendered the more joyous for all the faithful throughout the world. O truly most blessed night, more brilliant than all the nights of time: which merited to know the season and the hour: when from the virgin's womb came forth the Son of God, clothed in the body of our weakness. O sacred and stainless nativity: which the fruitfulness of a virgin brought forth. O fruitfulness above nature; which the purity of a virgin beautified, and the sovereign majesty chose: that man's mortality might be

saved. O blessed and gladsome birth; which has changed the curse of our first parents into blessing: and has turned their grief into everlasting joy. Deservedly is this night worthy of the veneration and love of all men: wherein Christ deigned to be born to deliver all. Blessed therefore be the holy Trinity: by Whose goodness and wisdom the dignity of mankind has been restored, and the cunning of the devil deceived. I bless Thee, heavenly Father: Who didst send Thy beloved Son into the world for our redemption. I bless Thee only-begotten Son of God, Jesus Christ: Who to redeem us men didst assume our nature. I bless Thee, Holy Ghost, the Paraclete: Who didst gloriously and wondrously perfect all the mysteries of our redemption from the beginning unto the end. To Thee be infinite praise and glory: to Thee be honour and empire, O supreme, eternal Trinity: by Whose providence and ordering so sweet and solemn a festival has come to us. Amen.

V

OF THE DEVOUT VISITING OF THE NEW-BORN INFANT JESUS

HAVE you seen Him whom my soul loveth? I speak to you, O holy angels: tell me what you know of my Jesus. Where is the Child that is born to us? Show me Him Whom my soul loveth. But if you will not show me: tell me at least by those whom you shall deem meet. I speak to you, O shepherds: tell me what you know of my Jesus. Where is the child that is born to us? What did the angel announce to you? “I bring you tidings,” he said, “of great joy: for this day is born to you a Saviour, Who is Christ the Lord in the city of David.” And what sign did he give you? “Ye shall find the Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes,” he said: “and laid in a manger.” And what did the holy angels sing? “Glory to God in the highest,” they sang: and they added, “on earth peace to men of good will.” And after this what did you do? “At once with haste and joy we went over to Bethlehem: and we found Jesus lying in a manger.” O me, what do I hear: how sweet and pleasant is this which I learn. It is enough for me at present. I will go and see this child: before I die. But wait a little while: I will go with you: and we shall all be received together. And do you, all ye angels of God, hasten: and lead me by a quick route to the manger of Christ. Open to me, Joseph and Mary; open the door, my dear ones: that entering His tent, I may adore His sacred feet. All the kings of the earth desired to see Solomon: and to hear his wisdom. And behold here a greater than Solomon. Permit me then to enter: that I may kiss His footstool. For it is He of Whom the prophets foretold; Whom the angels announced: Whom the shepherds visited. It is He Whom I seek, Whom I love: Whom I long to see.

What fearest, my soul? Call, seek, knock: until the door be opened to thee. "Go over to the place of the wonderful tabernacle: even to the house of God." Approach with trust, and draw nigh to the new-born Child WITH LOVE: for He shall not cast thee off, nor drive thee away: but freely He shall admit thee, and show thee His grace. Fear not the face of Him that wails in the manger: He is lamenting thy sins, not His own pains. He comes to seek thee: not to destroy. He comes to save thee: not to judge. He comes to loose thee: not to bind. He comes to suffer evils: not to inflict. He desires to deliver thee: not to imprison. What fearest thou before the poor little Child? He is God, thou sayest: and in His hand power and empire. It is true. Nevertheless He does not come now to judge: but to forgive sins. He offers mercy: He withholds vengeance. He tenders grace: He puts aside anger. He shows love: He casts out fear. HE DESIRES TO BE LOVED: RATHER THAN TO BE FEARED. Say therefore, "Thou art my Saviour and my Redeemer: O Lord my God, Thou art well come this day. O desirable and most lovable Child: show me Thy mercy: who am not yet fit to see Thy glory. Stretch out to me Thy right hand: who am not able to endure Thy justice. For Thy boundless love's sake, blot out all my iniquity. I am sick and covered with sores, heal my soul. I am blind and naked: enlighten my darkness: and clothe me with true virtue. I AM WITHERED AND CRIPPLED: WATER MY FACE WITH TEARS, AND DIRECT ALL MY STEPS IN THY PATHS. My heart speaks to Thee, my face seeks Thee; I long to see Thy countenance, Lord Jesus: and with the angels and shepherds devoutly to visit Thee. For Thou art the salvation of my wee and my God: Whom truly I ought to love above all things. None is more beautiful than Thou, none more lovable: none more noble than Thou, none more holy than Thou. Thou art wiser than all the wise: richer than all, greater than all. Thine are the heavens, and Thine is the earth: the sea and all things that are in them. Thine is the day, and Thine is the night, the summer and the spring were formed by Thee; Thou hast ordered all things in certain seasons: Who didst will to be born in the dark night and the winter cold."

O wondrous and ineffable love of God and my Lord Jesus Christ, wailing in the manger: Whom all the angels in Heaven praise and worship. O what great thanks am I bound to render to the most loving Lord my Saviour and my Redeemer, born for my salvation: Who refused not to be sheltered like a poor miserable man in a stable in the company of beasts. Certainly I have

no worthy praise-offering: but nevertheless I FREELY PRESENT THEE A GOOD WILL IN SIGN OF LOVE AND GRATITUDE. What more? Shall I sing with the holy angels: or weep from compassion, thinking on the tears of the wailing infant? Each of these actions gives pleasure, each of these actions affords delight: both to weep with Jesus, and to praise Jesus with the angels. And all this I desire to do to the glory of God; and to humble myself before the eyes of His Majesty: Who humbled Himself even to the form of a little child.

VI

OF ABIDING NEAR THE VENERABLE CRIB OF CHRIST

O HOW venerable is this place: this is no other but the house of God and the gate of Heaven. Enter, enter, my soul, this poor little domicile of the King: seek hospitality here to-day: here set thy dwelling: abide with Jesus and Mary: and celebrate with them this day's festival. Do not turn away elsewhere: but stand here to-day: or humbly sit NEAR THE CRIB. It is good for thee to be here: AND MUCH BETTER THAN TO DWELL IN THE GILDED MANSIONS OF KINGS. The dwelling in this little house ought to please thee much, and the society of these three staying here together; for even if the walls offend because of their poverty: the inhabitants nevertheless are exceedingly noble because of their patience and virtue. Here then today thou shalt dwell: here thou shalt abide, here THOU SHALT CONTINUE. But go in further and examine the building of this place more closely: seek and inquire where lies that venerable crib, which holds the Creator of the world: and guards the Child God, the treasure of Heaven, the price of redemption, the joy of angels and men. See how God born man lies bound in a cradle and holds His peace; in what great obscurity and poverty He dwells among strangers: Who with the Father in Heaven is the Giver of all things. Embrace this noble crib with loving arms; and kiss it with repeated kisses: then also humbly cast thyself down at Jesus' feet. Here worship God: here weep for devotion. Here watch, here pray: here read, here sing. Here chant psalms, here praise: here exult with all thy heart. Tell this Child if thou hast aught sad or burdensome: open out thy desires to Him: and treat of everything with Him. The sweet and lovable Child will teach the meek His ways: and will receive the prayers of the

humble. He can heal the sick: make whole the broken of heart, and bind up their wounds: grant pardon to the penitent, and deliver them from all their passions. Give Him thy heart: and beg Him to write thereon His most sweet name. Give Him all that thou hast: and be entirely His from henceforth and for evermore. The eternal and boundless love of Jesus will bring this to pass, that thou abandon thyself: and love Jesus above all things.

See now, my soul, and ponder: what riches are here and glory. I regard not perishable riches, nor joys of the world; but the incarnate Wisdom of God, the child-bearing Virgin: Joseph ministering, and the multitude of angels chanting. Truly the Lord is in this place: and I urge thee by no means depart hence. Where wilt thou find what thou hast here discovered? If thou wert to traverse the whole world, thou wouldst not find such a company: so holy a gathering, so united an assembly. The most holy in heaven and on earth are gathered together here: albeit they are very much neglected by worldlings, and reputed almost as nothing. For in all the world such wonders have not been wrought, nor sights so rare and strange beheld; nor such joyful tidings heard; as in this small shelter, where dwell Joseph and Mary, and the infant Jesus laid in the manger. Here are united God and man, mother and virgin: graybeard and child.

Weigh what means this condescension, such tenderness, such love: such humility, such poverty, such sweetness, such grace: and such overflowing mercy. Turn over all the deeds of old presaging Christ; and see how this day the witnesses of the Scriptures are fulfilled: and THE DEVOUT DESIRES of the holy prophets. Behold also the loving ministrations of the most blessed Virgin Mary; how boundless an exultation is hers with her noble offspring: what a sublime contemplation, to see the Son of God begotten of her, lying before her in the crib. Go over and ponder all in such manner: as if thou wert assisting in person at each. For no less ought to be thy love and devotion in revolving these things which have already taken place: than IF THOU SHOULDST BEHOLD THE SAME THIS DAY ACCOMPLISHED IN THY PRESENCE. Let therefore the holy remembrance abide with thee renewed each year; yea not only once a year shouldst thou be mindful of Jesus, born and laid in the manger: but very often should He have place in thy devotions. Great wisdom is learnt from this Child; great purity and patience: such as should be sufficient to edify thy whole life. Every action of Christ indeed is a lesson to thee: and His

every suffering is thy comfort. For He has been made unto thee and all the people, salvation and redemption. He teaches thee rather by His example, than by word: He persuades effectively rather by His own actions; than by the deeds of others. Let therefore the sacred birth of Christ be always fresh to thee: and suffer not so venerable a festivity ever to pass without attentive contemplation. And if outward worship pass away with the season: diligent meditation shall not however pass from the mind. Be not therefore ungrateful to God for this grace, my poor little soul, who hast been so anxiously sought: so compassionately drawn, so lovingly called, so sweetly visited: so fully rejoiced this day. For it is not permitted thee to be sad on the birthday of life: since everywhere it is a day of joy. To thee this day the Infant Jesus is born, to thee a child is given: that with the little thou mayest become little, with the poor poor, with the humble humble, with the patient patient, with the meek sweet and mild. Bow thyself therefore humbly to Him, submit thyself freely: that thus thou mayest merit to exult with Him eternally: Who to gather the little came down from the high dwelling-places of Heaven, Jesus Christ the Son of God.

Gather now in this short space of time: what may serve for thy profit all thy life. How knowest thou whether this may not be thy last festival on earth? And would that thou couldst celebrate it now so devoutly, solemnize it so zealously; that thou mightest conceive a great trust towards Jesus: thereby also at the end of time to merit to pass with Him to the everlasting festival. Doubtless it shall be strictly demanded of thee: how much thou hast conformed thyself to Him in life. While therefore there is still time, and earnest devotion avails, take care that it pass not fruitlessly; but enter into such fellowship with Him: that thou mayest be known among His chosen friends. If it pleased Christ to manifest these things for thy salvation: let it not weary thee intently to meditate thereon. Christ is silent with His mouth: but He speaks in deed. His tongue utters no word: but His tender limbs are eloquent. His lowliness speaks: and His great poverty discourses. The blessed Virgin Mary likewise holds her peace: but the elements are not silent. He lies hid in a manger: but He is made known by an angel. He appears base and abject in the swaddling clothes: but in signs He is proclaimed magnificent. Herod is troubled: but the shepherds seek him. The Scribes and Pharisees disdain: but the three blessed Magi adore Him. Contemplate then in Him not only the great and sublime, but the little also

and the lowly; for in each nature He is shown forth the Lord, great and exceedingly to be praised: high above all the angels, and among men the most lowly. Things human are united with the divine, the highest with the lowest; the noble with the base, the glorious with the little: to be venerated together with meet worship by all the faithful. Let not then the swaddling clothes scandalize thee: which preach the humility of the Son of God. Nor let the poor little crib trouble thee: which the King of kings and the Lord of angels hath chosen for Himself. Look not to what is brilliant in the eyes of the flesh: but how great a mystery of salvation is here wrought. LOOK UPON JESUS AND MARY, THE MASTER AND THE MISTRESS OF THE WORLD: that they have no thought for the things of the world. MIGHTY PALACES ARE NOT HERE: BUT HEAVENLY CONSOLATIONS. Here resounds not the clamour of trumpet or lute: but the voices of the heavenly host are heard. Would that thou didst feel thyself to be present in spirit to all this: and couldst not endure to abide elsewhere. The Word of God is now near to thy mouth; if only thou seek with a right heart. For He is found in the lap of His mother: Who before time was in the bosom of the Father. God has become so near to thee, that He can be held as an infant; carried as a babe: for “the Word is made flesh, and has dwelt among us.” Behold Whom all the world cannot contain: He lies as a poor child in a manger. And Who bears all things by the word of His power: He is borne by His mother. Whom the cherubim praise and the seraphim: He is nourished with a little milk. What herein is not wonderful; what not lovable? What more wilt thou have? How could He be nearer and more like to thee? BEHOLD THY BONE AND THY FLESH: THY GOD HAS BECOME THY BROTHER. Who ever saw the like: or who ever heard anything similar? Woe to thee if thou depart from Him: and well is it with thee if thou draw nigh to Him with thy whole heart. Draw near with confidence to the throne of His grace: for although He be poor in material things: in Him nevertheless are hid all the treasures of the wisdom and knowledge of God. Make ready then clean lips to kiss; wash thy eyes with tears to see: cleanse thy hands to touch; open thy arms to embrace: humbly bend thy knees to worship. O if thou hadst now a clean cradle, beautifully adorned on all sides with gold and gems: that thou mightest place the God born child therein. But there is no casket so meet and worthy to receive the God babe; as thy own heart purified from all sin. For He DOES NOT SEEK

EXTERNAL ORNAMENT: BUT THAT WHICH IS MYSTICALLY SYMBOLIZED BY EXTERIOR ORNAMENT, THIS IS VERY DEAR AND PLEASING TO HIM. But how shalt thou be fit worthily to receive Him? Thou art black and ugly: and He exceedingly beautiful and comely. What wilt thou do? It is not well to retire from His presence: and it is not becoming to approach with unwashed countenance. How shalt thou be made clean, entangled as thou art in many vices? But be not too fearful: nor despair of thy wounds. Be displeased that thou art such: weep over the stains of thy faults, wash away with inward sorrow the guiltiness of thy conscience; and seek of Him the oil of mercy, the free granting of a full remission: and the restoring of fresh grace. Thou shalt not be without hope: although stained exceedingly. This Child can cleanse the unclean, make white the black, appease the tempestuous, sweeten the bitter: lighten the burdensome, and root out all that is vicious: speedily bring joy and peace of heart. He is such that He cannot be defiled: and by His touch diseases are healed, and the weak strengthened. Now therefore prepare for Him from within a beautiful crib; in which to place Jesus, the Son of God.

VII

OF THE JOY OF THIS DAY, AND THE DEVOUT SERVICE OF JESUS

REJOICING I will rejoice in the Lord: and I will joy in God, my Jesus. O most sweet Jesus and most loving Babe, my joy and my crown: my soul longs to sing and praise Thee. Suffer me to spend one joyous day with Thee: and to pass this holy day in spiritual gladness. For although short be the day and passing the night of Thy birth: nevertheless great is the subject matter for exercising devotion, and as it were an undying fire is lit upon the altar. I hope then that this day will be longer, and that I shall be more devout therein than is wont; so that my fervour pass not away with the season: but rather grow with earnest meditation. O day of joy, day of the eternal King: depart not from me so speedily: but be to me the cause of everlasting bliss. O when will come that day, to which no night succeeds: which knows not diversity of seasons, but where it is ever bright and daylight; where God is seen face to face, where Jesus is perfectly loved and praised, where the mind is never drawn away from Him, and the affection of the heart never defiled: but where He is all in all. Because of that day of eternity this day is solemnized in time: and that I might live ever there with Jesus: He willed to be here one of mortal men.

O venerable and supremely lovable Jesus, O sweetly to be embraced, worthily to be worshipped and ever to be preached, Babe most glorious; Thou art my only beloved, sought after before all and above all: to Whom I owe myself entirely, and, whatever I can add or desire, comes not up to my wish. For Thou art above all: and whatever I can possess or give is almost nothing, and less than little. I know and faithfully believe, that for my sake Thou hast come hither: for my sake Thou hast willed lowly to be laid here.

For Thou hast done all this for my eternal salvation: and to commend to me the more dearly Thy boundless love.

O how much I am bound to love Thee, how much to praise and bless with angels and archangels, with saints and all men of good will: because for me Thou hast become incarnate and made man. It is strange if ever my thought can wander from Thee: and, after tasting Thy sweetness, be turned away to anything else. Truly Thou art a hidden manna, having in itself all sweetness: and surpassing all other sweetness. Thou art a paradise of delight, Thou a garden of pleasures: Thou art the source of wisdom, the sun of justice, the light of the world, the joy of Heaven, the peace of the heart, the comfort of the soul: hope in affliction, refuge in temptation, help in every need. Thy presence brings me joy: Thy absence often causes me grief. All this however love effects, which suffers not the lover to repose without: but compels him either to rejoice in Thee, or sweetly to weep for Thee. Who has brought me hither; if not Love? And who drew Thee from Heaven: and brought Thee down to me; if not Love? O Love and love: how sweet and strong is this love. Thence arises so great a clamour within, and thence springs so burning an eagerness: that nothing to it yields taste or delight, except Jesus, eternal love. This love makes us despise the world: and reckon all things as nothing. This makes us forsake our own: and live under the yoke of obedience. This makes us reject the delights of the flesh: and eagerly seek the toil of penance. This makes us flee the noise of the world: and take leisure with God in silence. This makes us die to the world: and live to God alone.

The love of Jesus draws my heart to the crib: and wills that I offer Him devout service. And now what shall I do for the beloved babe, my Lord God, made little for my sake? Hast Thou need of me; Who holdest Heaven and earth at Thy beck? And if Thou dost not need my ministration: nevertheless I need Thine, Whom I am bound to serve according to my power; since for me all grace and virtue come from Thee: and my whole good depends upon Thee. Would that I could do something pleasing to Thee: for this would be most delightful to me. And if I have not been able to serve Thee in the flesh, and was not worthy to be admitted to this: still in the spirit I can do all by the affection of the heart, and the zeal of a good will. For also BY SERVING MY BRETHREN FOR THY NAME'S SAKE, I can perform many deeds of love which Thou considerest as done to Thee.

I desire indeed to arouse by loving words: my devotion towards Thy sacred infancy. Certainly I will not depart hence, but I will sit here near Thee; and contemplate meanwhile Thy dear face: so that I may thus the better forget my misery. Here will I meditate on Thy commandments: and exercise myself in Thy wonders. Here will I be up-lifted from earthly things: and associated with heavenly. Here will I think on the days of old: and have in mind the eternal years. Here will I ponder my last end: and my years in groanings. Here will I appease Thy face by prayer: and beseech my Judge. Here will I be mindful of Thy works: and of Thy numberless blessings bestowed upon the race of man. Here will I find my heart: here will I abandon myself wholly. For IT IS BETTER THAT JESUS SHOULD HAVE MY HEART THAN I: because with Him it is at rest: with me it is in unrest. Here will I sleep, here repose: and my slumber shall be sweet. Here will I arise at midnight to praise Thee: and pray Thee for my sins. From the morning I will watch unto Thee: and to Thy name will I sing the livelong day. If I go forth I will say, I shall come back soon: and if I delay long, I will seek forgiveness. Again will I pray and appease Thy face: nor will I cease to give thanks. I will rise in great wonder: and I will praise Thy honied name, blessed for ever. I will sit again in my poverty: knowing that I am not worthy or able to think of such ineffable goods: sweet above all the desirable things of the world. Then reverently I will worship Thee: and I will offer Thee all Thy good things; wishing and longing that all Thy works praise Thee: albeit fully praise Thee they cannot. THEREFORE I BESEECH THAT THOU THYSELF PRAISE THYSELF: FOR UNLESS THOU PRAISE THYSELF: NEVER SHALT THOU BE FULLY AND WORTHILY PRAISED. Praise now, O my soul, the Lord: praise thy God, O Sion. Praise Jesus the Saviour: and if thou canst not praise Him perfectly: nevertheless cease not to praise Him partially, according to thy powers.

In my life I will praise Thee, O good Jesus, sweet and dear Babe: I WILL SING PSALMS TO MY GOD AS LONG AS I AM. For Thou hast called me to Thy most holy crib: in which Thou hast deigned to lie for me unworthy. Who can draw me away from this? No one, Lord Jesus: for Thou art my beloved, from Whom I will not be separated for ever. I will abide here therefore IN THE SERVICE OF MY MASTER, AND OF MY MISTRESS, holy Mary, and of St. Joseph, Thy fosterer: if perchance there be need of any service. I will make a little fire, I will blow it diligently: I

will lay the table, and bring in the water. I will clean out the hall, I will sweep the little house; I will stop up the cracks and crevices: because of the stormy winds and rain. I will tidy this noble and royal manger; I will arrange neatly therein the hay and the straw: for there are no precious linens here. Then I will gather roses and lilies: I will bring flowers and grasses; I will beautify this holy nursery, which does not seem to me dirty like a stable: but gives me more pleasure than an imperial palace. I will also open the window; that the brightness of God may shine from within, and the holy angels fly in from above: and fill this whole house with sweet praise. I will shut the door carefully; that Herod may not enter to destroy the Babe: Whom I have undertaken faithfully to guard. For I would suffer myself to be slain: sooner than sacrilegious hands be laid on Him. And if it be necessary to fly, and He will have it so, I am also ready to cross over into Egypt. But when the shepherds come, to them I will open with joy: and bring them into this court of the supreme King. For they are those to whom the angel announced this mystery: and directed to visit; whom devotion brought here: and the praise of God led back. Then, when the holy Magi arrive from eastern parts, joyously I will run to meet such honourable guests, kings and counts; and having greeted them all with becoming respect, I will invite them to enter this court, to behold the face of the KING AND QUEEN: Whose wondrous sign shines in the heavens. With them entering I will enter; with them worshipping I will worship, with them offering I WILL OFFER MYSELF ENTIRELY: AND WHATEVER I MAY HAVE, ALL THIS I GIVE AS A HOLOCAUST TO THE LORD. But when they return to their own country, I will abide here in the court; that I may serve the Lord my King: and His blessed Mother, the ever and glorious Virgin Mary. No man shall be able to call me hence from this court: no bull, no authority, no gift or promise to turn me away. Here will I establish my covenant; here will I make an everlasting compact: here will I live, here die, and here all shall end.

Let it please thee, I beseech, my Lady, holy Mary: that I abide in the service of thee, and of Thy Son, my Lord, with all devotion and reverence. For I am more pleased to be here and beg with you: than to be in delights with the kings and princes of the world. And if it be needful even to beg: I will go out cheerfully and beg enough for us. And if nobody be willing to give: I will suppliantly beseech the holy angels: and they will provide

sufficiently for us from Heaven. For in place of earthly bread: they will rain down for us heavenly manna. O Jesus, manna of hearts, having in itself all sweetness: Thou art our food and our comfort. The affection of devotion speaketh here: and whatever is prepared here tastes most sweet to him that loveth. I beseech thee also, venerable father Joseph, who art so called because of the dignity of thy ministry, and to veil the heavenly secret: that thou deign to admit me to aid thee. Bid something be brought for the comfort of the mother and the Babe: I will be ready for services of this kind.

O if I had known when you first came hither; I should certainly have gone with you: and I should have led the ox, or the ass. Willingly I should have carried the cloak of my Lady, or Joseph's bag, all the long way: or even I should have procured a shelter. O would that I had been so near, that I should have heard the holy angels sing, and this great joy would have been announced to me; ah, how joyously and with what haste I should have gone over to Bethlehem, and should have outrun the shepherds themselves, if I could: that thus I might have merited to be the first to see my new born Lord. And if they reverently returned to their flock: I nevertheless should have remained with my Infant Lord. I should have been willing to forsake all my sheep: rather than leave my Jesus; or even to sell the whole flock: that I might provide thence for my Lord with His family. But it has not been given to all, to see the Word of God made flesh: and laid so innocently in the manger. To all nevertheless it is now preached, and proclaimed throughout the whole world: so that if anyone wishes to believe, and seeks to be saved, and draws nigh with a whole and pure heart to this Child; he shall receive remission of all his sins from Him: and by His gift after this mortality shall possess eternal life. Amen.

VIII

OF THE DESIRE OF SEEING AND EMBRACING JESUS

SHOW me Thy face: let Thy voice sound in my ears. For Thy voice is sweet and Thy face comely. These are the words of a loving soul, to Thee, most sweet Jesus Christ. But I beseech Thee, good Babe: that Thou also grant to me a sinner to say these words in the desire of my soul. For when shall I be satiated of thinking and speaking of Thee? For Thou art the salvation of my countenance, and my God. Show me therefore Thy face: and my soul shall be saved. Whensoever I am sad, look upon me and pity me: and my soul shall be comforted. For Thou art my hope from my youth: and unto length of days and old age forsake me not. O how lovable and sweet Thou hast become to men: for whom Thou hast deigned to be made a little child. For by such charity Thou drawest me to Thyself, and dost mightily press me to Thyself in Thy love. O most sweet and most loving child Jesus: deign to comfort me a while this day. My soul loves Thee: because Thou hast first loved me. For on account of Thine immense love, and the incomparable sweetness Thou hast shown towards me: Thou didst come down from that secret dwelling of Heaven into the prison of this world to visit and console me. And now Thou hast done well by coming: and Thou hast acted with much wisdom and sweetness appearing in such guise. Putting on human nature: Thou hast taken the form of a most beautiful babe: Who abiding in the Godhead pure and simple without any figure surpassest all understanding. But I in my grossness could not grasp such a substance excelling all shape: therefore in condescension to me Thou hast united my nature with Thyself, presenting the familiar form of a man; that thus by nearness of nature Thou mightest show greater affection: and

by the visible aspect of man lead us by the hand to the invisible substance of the Godhead.

O most sweet incarnate Wisdom of God: how sweetly and wisely Thou drawest me by Thy dear infancy. Turn now Thy face to me, good Jesus, and cast me not away from among Thy children; but show me a gracious mien: that seeing Thee, my heart may be glad, and conceive thence new joy. O happy hour, when Thou lookest upon me with eyes of tenderness: and showest me the favour I desire. For this is a sign of Thy clemency: this affords me confidence and comfort. This also invites me to kiss Thy feet, hands, and blessed mouth. O feet of my Lord Jesus Christ, sacred and worthy of every embrace, small and tender, confined within the narrowness of the manger; who shall yet walk for me: and oft be wearied. Alas! you suffer no little cold: for haply you have not sufficient clothing to cover, and fire to warm. These are the tender and beloved feet of my Lord Saviour: yet to be pierced on the cross with sharp nails. And then you shall be fearfully bathed in blood: who now bear patiently the hard frost. These are the feet most prompt to carry the tidings of peace; ready to tread the rough road: destined to show the world the way of eternal salvation. These are the feet of mercy and justice; before which the Ethiopians shall fall, the demons flee: and kings and princes worship. Then shall draw nigh sinners doing penance; and devoutly kissing them: they shall obtain pardon and grace.

O beloved Babe, not only Thy feet: but Thy hands also and head and other members offer me to kiss, bless and praise. O most lovely and most pure hands, perfectly proportioned: in no point either too great or too small. These are Thy hands, O Lord, which have made me and formed me: and now have come to restore me. They shall aid me to toil faithfully: and strengthen me manfully against divers temptations. They shall support me in good that I fail not: and upraise me in evil lest I despair. THEY SHALL BLESS LITTLE ONES: and give health to many sick. They shall combat the devil: and reduce all his power to naught. After many years they shall be fastened to the cross; and then they shall send forth broad streams of blood. Stretched out on the cross they shall beseech forgiveness for me: and wounded, obtain me pardon of sins. They shall open the door of paradise: destroy the gates of hell: and lead thence its captives. They shall appear with their wounds to men at the judgement: and openly show how much God wrought and suffered for their salvation. Let this left hand be under my

head: and that right embrace me. O if I merit so great a good: how happy and joyous shall I be. Hence now with greater confidence I will dare to draw nigh to the kiss of Thy mouth: and with the boldness of love to press my lips upon Thy holy lips. And if the height of the Godhead terrify: nevertheless the likeness of human nature most strongly urges: and the wondrous sweetness of Thy baby littleness.

O holy and stainless mouth of my Lord, full of wisdom and grace; Thou shalt teach me the ways of life, Thou shalt fill me with praise: Thou art to comfort me with good discourse. For if at times the speech of a learned man gives pleasure; how much more will the word of grace from Thy mouth delight? O honied mouth of my Lord, how lovely are Thy lips; how white Thy teeth: how sweetly it shall distil Thy speech. This mouth then of the Lord shall speak judgement and justice; strike the wicked with its lips: and destroy the impious from the earth. It shall open the hidden things of the scriptures: and unveil heavenly secrets. It shall make manifest the counsels of hearts: and make void the wisdom and design of men. The islands shall hold their peace before Thee: and kings and princes of the earth shall marvel. The noble and the lowly shall be converted: and the learned shall impose silence on their mouth. For WHEN GOD SPEAKS, THE EARTH AND THE WORLD SHALL BE SILENT: and all the power of the heavens shall obey the command of Thy mouth.

O precious and golden mouth of the Saint of saints; who shall be worthy even once to kiss Thee, or to touch the summit of Thy head? It is in sooth a pure and holy soul that saith, "Let Him kiss me with the kiss of His mouth." SHE THAT LOVES, SEEKS THE KISS: but she that fears, is ashamed to draw near. NOTHING SO RECONCILES, NOTHING SO APPEASES GOD: AS THE PURE LOVE OF GOD AND CONTEMPT OF SELF. I beseech Thee, good Babe, Jesus most sweet, Babe small and great; perform this mercy with Thy servant, that with humble condescension Thou suffer me to touch, embrace, and kiss Thee with kisses of love: as long as Thou art small, and lying in a manger. For thus Thou art loved more sweetly: held more lovingly: borne more easily, and feared less. But when Thou art become a man, it is not lawful to act thus: but it will behove to pass to things more serious. All things have their season. Now it is the season of embracing; later it shall be the season of weeping: when in place of the kiss of the mouth will be given Thee the cup of bitter brewing. Now it is better

to taste the joy of Thy birth: but great sorrow of compassion will rather be felt later: when Thou art stretched naked on the cross; Who now, wrapped in swaddling-clothes, art laid in a manger. Give me, most loving Babe, the kiss of Thy charity: and accept the worship of my humility. Behold my desire, and offer the sacred KISS OF THY MOUTH; and let this be to me a sign of peace: and AN INDISSOLUBLE BOND OF MUTUAL LOVE. I know and believe that Thy touch heals: Thy embrace unites: THY KISS IMPRESSES LOVE. Whom Thou touchest within, Thou curest of fleshly affection; whom Thou embracest, Thou unitest with Thyself: Thou sweetly kissest him: whom Thou makest to be fervent in Thy love. Now tell me what thinkest Thou: and make me experience the word that is spoken.

“Receive,” saith this Babe, “a kiss, and understand a mystery; for no man knoweth but he that receiveth; and no man receiveth, but he that has learnt to walk in the spirit. Then I kiss thee, when I infuse into thee the gift of My love. Then I EMBRACE THEE; WHEN I DRAW ALL THE AFFECTIONS OF THY HEART TO ME: so that there be NOTHING in creatures, that CAN allure or attract THEE. But then thou dost kiss Me: when thou art compunct with true, sincere love: and seekest comfort of no creature. Thou dost kiss My feet: if thou followest the steps of My humility, from love rather than from fear. Thou dost kiss My hands: if all good works done or to be done, the whole thou dost attribute not to thyself, but to Me. And then thou dost embrace Me: when thou feelest thyself united with Me by intimate affection of heart, and so strongly bindest thyself: that thou desirest TO BE WHOLLY MINE, and keepest back NOTHING of private love TO THYSELF. Then shalt thou be able to say with the spouse in the Canticle, ‘My beloved to me, and I to Him: Who feedeth among the lilies.’ If thou wouldst freely forsake thyself, and despise all earthly things; I would receive thee as My familiar friend: and make thee rich in virtues. For who is devoted and wholly given to Me: I to him in turn will manifest Myself utterly without reserve; because therefore was I, God, made man: that man might be in Me for ever blessed. I have given Myself all to man: that man might be wholly given to Me. For ‘My delights are to be with the children of men’: to whom I have come to give also the kingdom of Heaven: and by contempt of the world to bring to the everlasting fellowship of the angels.”

IX

TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN, THAT SHE SHOW US HER SON, JESUS

MY Spirit hath rejoiced: in God my Saviour. Rejoice this day, holy Mary: bringing forth the joys of a new salvation. Rejoice, Mother intact: because the glorious flower of virginity abides with thee. Rejoice, childbearing Maiden: because thou art free of the curse and reproach of women. Justly canst thou rejoice in Jesus, thy Saviour; for Whom the heavens contain not, thou dost nurse in thy lap: and with thy holy hands dost lay Him in the manger. Justly dost thou worship Him, Who is born of thee in time: for thou knowest He has a Father above thee, God Rightly dost thou offer Him a mother's service: to Whom thou dost owe an unblemished begetting. Rightly does thy spirit rejoice in Him above all things: by Whose grace thou hast become so sublime and HEAVENLY. Let Heaven and earth praise thee: and all the beauty thereof render thee thanksgiving. Let my soul praise thee, Lady MOST DEAR: AND ALL MY INTERIOR EXULT IN THY PRESENCE WITH THE DEEPEST REVERENCE. The tongue suffices not, to proclaim thy praises: nor the mind to meditate thy greatness. Therefore with exceeding humility: I bow before thee, beauteous Mother of God. Accept my homage and with gentle love give heed to the desires of my heart.

My soul seeks to see Jesus: for I know that He is my good. Show me the hidden treasure: which thou hast lying near thee. I believe that Jesus is the only-begotten Son of God: and the first-born of thy fruitful virginity. Him I acknowledge my God, Creator and Redeemer: born today for my salvation. Him I seek to see through thee: and reverently to worship. Thou hast wrapped Him in swaddling clothes; and so He cannot easily be seen: or

recognized by strangers. FOR UNLESS THOU, HOLY MOTHER, DEIGNEST TO SHOW HIM: WHO SHALL BE WORTHY TO LOOK UPON HIM? For by thee we have access to the Son: and by the Son to the Father. Show Him therefore to me: and it is enough for me before all else. I ask not, nor seek any other comfort, but Jesus thy Son: my chief refuge, thy singular joy. My Lady, holy Mary, with a great desire I desire to see Jesus: Whom I know thou lovest before all and above all. My heart desires Jesus: my affection cries for Jesus. "If thou wilt see Jesus," she saith: "then it behoves thee to have pure and clear eyes. If thou wilt see Jesus: strive to keep thyself humble and devout in all things. If thou wilt see Jesus: thou must leave all earthly things, and despise thyself." O most beloved Mary, I know that I am exceedingly impure: and exceedingly unworthy to behold thy Son. But nevertheless I cannot rest: unless I first see Him. I am utterly unable to hold my peace: but from mighty affection I am compelled to importune. I know that He wishes to be asked; and that thou wilt willingly aid the petitioner: therefore I must not easily desist from my prayer.

Jesus, Son of God, have pity upon me, I crave; show Thyself to the soul that seeks Thee: and longs to behold Thy countenance. Why hast Thou been willing to come into the world; if Thou wilt not be seen by men? Why hast Thou deigned to be born; if Thou wouldst not also be recognized? And why hast Thou chosen to be laid here; save that Thou mightest be more easily found, and more openly seen, and embraced? I could not rise to Thee in Heaven, to see Thee: and therefore Thou hast come into the world to me that I might have Thee visibly before me. Do not then deny Thyself to me: otherwise Thou drivest me to weep. If Thou wilt not be seen: why didst Thou reveal Thyself to the shepherds? For they came in haste and saw. If Thou wilt lie concealed; why didst Thou call the Magi from the East to Thy cradle by the guidance of a star? But certainly Thou wilt be seen: for Thou makest Thyself be sought by many. Therefore I also will to see Thee. And although I am not a shepherd or a king, I am nevertheless one who would willingly be OF THY SHEEP: AND DESIRES TO BE RULED BY THY PRELATES. For if I do not see Thee, I shall not rest: and unless I embrace Thee, I will not hold my peace. Grant me therefore to see Thee: and Thou shalt see me be silent in peace. For Thou art that beloved: Whom I long to see. The heavens, the earth, the sea, and all things that are therein, I care not to behold: so that if only once I be able to gaze upon Thee. All

things are narrow and little to me in comparison of Thee: until I merit to see and enjoy Thee. I say once: but I mean for ever. I ask little: but I desire it to be long. Now therefore satisfy my desire: and fill me with joy in Thy countenance. If thou deniest me this: know that Thou wilt sadden me not a little. And if Thou dost sadden me; who is there that can comfort me? Was it not to be consoled by Thee that I came to see Thee: and to rejoice much in the sight of Thee?

“Come,” He saith, “good desirer: come and see. I am Jesus, whom thou seekest. If therefore thou seekest Me: suffer all else to depart. Bring hither thy heart: and see thy Lord. See in the spirit, as of old the HOLY PROPHETS SAW: WHO, ILLUMINED BY FAITH, foretold that I should be born of a Virgin. For the eye of the heart is needed here, and such an eye beholds Me: but the eye of the body is not wanted here: which often is found harmful. For who believes in Me: he sees Me. AND WHO LOVES ME: HE POSSESSES ME. Therefore by believing, thou shall see Me: and by loving, possess Me. Look therefore diligently and consider: and thy soul shall be comforted. See My humility and POVERTY: AND THOU SHALL FIND GREAT EDIFICATION. Behold all the things that are about Me: and thou shalt find nothing costly. See that when I was rich and full: I became poor and in want for thy sake. See that like a strange pilgrim upon earth: and not in my own house, but in an inn, I was born. Look at all this well.” Yea, Lord Jesus. Whence also my soul compassionates Thee, seeing Thy want: and my conscience is sharply reprov'd for its impatience and superfluity. If such be Thy beginning: what will yet be the end? But Thou, Who hast come to suffer: hast chosen poverty and abjection before wealth and honours. “See moreover My hands and feet; that I am bound as a helpless mortal, biding under a mother’s care; as one of the children of men weeping. How canst thou laugh: who considerest that God weeps for thee? See My face beautiful, pleasant, gracious: powerful to cast out all sadness and trouble. But do not, however, ponder merely this outward comeliness, which can be seen equally by the good and the bad; and which will yet be disfigured by My enemies: but direct the sight of the heart to the inner and abiding beauty. See therefore what love I bore towards thee: Who willed to be made mortal man for thee. See My wisdom, which I lost not; that I have assumed a nature without sin: and have undergone the penalty without guilt. See the fullness of grace which I have brought to the world: and the

wondrous light which I have desired to infuse into all them that believe. No one of the saints or men had so great a desire for My incarnation: as the desire which I had to be incarnate. For as soon as the preordained moment arrived: with the message of the angel and the consent of Mary at once I was conceived God-man. See therefore My inestimable love; that I burned wholly for the salvation and redemption of man: and could refuse him nothing that was advantageous or necessary.”

“O if thou couldst now behold My most burning heart, and couldst feel at least in small part that divine charity which I bear thee: THOU WOULDST NEVER CEASE FROM LOVE AND PRAISE: THOU WOULDST NEVER WEIGH THY OWN TOIL OR GRIEF. See with the inner eyes of faith that the divine and the human nature have been united in one person; and that this most excellent union continues unbroken: and contemplate concerning each nature as much as thou pleasest and canst. For in Me are hidden all the treasures of the wisdom of God; and beside Me there is no salvation for any man living: nor hope of eternal life for the dying. Let thy eyes then be ever towards Me, and thy heart abide with Me: and above all things desirable repose thou in Me. For I am the Lord thy God, Who made thee: and assumed thy nature to draw thee to Me. Come to Me without fear: I am thy brother, prepared even to die for thee. Why dost thou delay? Draw near with haste; and dismiss all things else: that can hinder thee. If thou dost so, thou shalt find thy beloved, in Whom thou shalt most blissfully rejoice: and thou shalt more easily bear all things burdensome. Take especial care, that nothing unrighteous or impure come into thy heart, to wound or trouble thee: or vainly engage thee, or cause thee inner darkness. Between thee and Me nothing must come, that hinders union; or lessens charity, or takes away liberty: or stains purity, or troubles the interior of the heart.” “And who shall attain this, O Lord?” “He, who believes that nothing suffices him, save the supreme good, which is I: from Whom flows all good, in Whom are all the good things of Heaven and earth, of the sea, and all the abysses. He, who seeks Me only and alone before all things and above all things, and ever bears Me in mind; who despises himself for My sake; and loves Me purely for Myself: he can contemplate, and praise Me and rejoice with Mary in the Holy Ghost, now and for ever. Amen.”

X

OF THE LOSS AND THE FINDING OF JESUS IN THE TEMPLE

THE Child Jesus remained in Jerusalem: and His parents knew it not. Thou hast heard, faithful soul, how a few days ago the lovable Jesus revealed Himself to the shepherds and the kings: and how great was then the joy of his parents: yea and to thee also no small joy was added from the learning of so many good tidings. But to-day, alas, a very unhappy and sorrowful thing has happened; which may well pierce the heart: and stun all who hear it. For it is related that the beloved Jesus was lost by his parents; and, alack, at that time: when His parents went up to the temple to celebrate the feast. O sudden change of the right hand of the Most High. For if Jesus is lost, what joy can there be then in the heart of man? For who has lost Jesus: he has lost more than the whole world. Would it not have been better to have remained at home; than to lose Jesus on the way? Alas, what kind of festival is this: which so great a calamity overshades. For there is no greater grief: than that the comfort of mourners should be said to be lost. Let no pious soul doubt: that Mary was much grief-stricken in this loss of her Son. Would she not have been more pleased to remain in obscurity at Nazareth; than to appear in Jerusalem to-day? But the holy Mother wished to fulfil the custom of the sacred law: and to give all an example of perfect obedience. Therefore she left her home and city: and visited the temple of God with her Son and Joseph. But for a proof of her patience, and for our great profit, God permitted this to happen, that Mary should lose her Son: should seek Him lost sorrowing, and after three days should find Him in the holy temple: and should the more joyously carry back with her her treasure found.

But, O good parents, how could this happen; that you should suffer so beloved a Child to leave your side? Where were your eyes; when they were not fixed upon Jesus? How shall I excuse you of so great a neglect? Did you not deservedly lose Him; Whom you did not watch with sufficient care? But again how shall I dare reprove you in aught; whom I know to be holy and most devout in all? And how also did this good Child make bold; to go anywhere without your knowledge and without permission? Does He not seem to have given you cause of boundless grief; when He absented Himself so long from the eyes of your veneration? Or was it lawful for Him to do all that He would; since He did all with God. I am satisfied, because so He willed: for He is God, Whom no man can reproach. For the eternal wisdom of the Father could not do anything unwisely: Who rules the world in equity. Therefore He has done all things well, not only by revealing His presence to His friends: but also sometimes for certain reasons by hiding His face from His beloved ones.

But Jesus went up to the celebration of the legal feast, not to sanctify Himself according to the law: or to cleanse His conscience by prayer, Who was born holy; but to implore pardon for us: and to teach that THE CHURCH IS TO BE FREQUENTED, FOR THE OBTAINING OF HEAVENLY GIFTS. He entered the temple to hear the masters and teachers, Who was the Master and Lord of all; that children and youths may learn from early age to read their letters, frequent the school: be intent on learning, give heed to masters; not wander about the streets: or be engaged in foolish games. For eagerness to learn the arts is highly commendable in early years: since by them the understanding is aided to make progress in the divine Scriptures: inasmuch as GOD IS HENCE LOVED THE MORE the more often the word of God is heard, and the more clearly it is explained by teachers: and the more faithfully committed to a good memory from the book. The Child Jesus therefore gave an example to young and old to persevere in the study of saving wisdom: so that none grow slack from idleness, none give ear to vain matters; but that children humbly listen to their masters, diligently seek them: and learn with all discipline. But the old, according to the grace given them and the capacity of the young, should teach with prudence: and faithfully deliver the rules of faith handed down by the holy apostles and prophets: so that all the hearers of the word may recognize Jesus seated in the midst of the doctors, and ever make

progress unto better: and devoutly praise God, Who has given such grace to their instructors. AND AS TEACHERS SURPASS OTHERS IN LEARNING AND WISDOM: SO THEY OUGHT TO EXCEL THEM IN THE MERIT OF THEIR LIFE AND THE DISCIPLINE OF THEIR MORALS. Let then both learned and unlearned strive to imitate the examples of the so holy humility and obedience of Jesus Christ and to submit themselves to the divine will. For Christ, a Child of twelve years and a Teacher from Heaven, set an example of each in Himself: while after the manner of little ones He gave ear to the masters, and reverently bowed His head: and, when most gently reproached by His most blessed Mother, at once willingly obeyed His parents, and went with them: as docile in His ways, so also subject to laws both human and divine: as it behoved and befitted in doing and forbearing.

Would, O Lord Jesus, Thou wouldst grant me more diligently to contemplate the history of this Thy action. For I often find myself turning over in my mind; Thy action once when present in the flesh towards Thy mother: when Thou wert lost and found again by her. Alas, how often I lose Thee by the force of my sins; how sad I walk, when I have been abandoned by Thy grace: and left without comfort to my own poverty. What wonder if then I grieve and heavily groan, deprived of Thy saving sweetness; and destitute almost of all hope of recovering consolation? O how long the delay, and wearisome the hour seems to me, to be without divine consolation; because Jesus, my comforter, is away: and I know not when He will come again. What shall I do; or whither shall I go to seek Jesus, Whom my soul loveth? Where is He now; Who is wont to gladden me with great joy? I know, I know that if He will conceal Himself, no man shall find Him; no man touch Him, no man take Him: because His hour hath not yet come. And if He deign to reveal Himself, at once He is at the door; He enters, the doors being shut: He visits the dwelling of the mind, and shows Himself by SIGNS SO CERTAIN; that there is no need to ask, "Who art Thou?" because the fire of love, infused into the soul, proclaims that Jesus is come, and He Himself has done all this. In this moment of trial, I am often troubled and afflicted within myself: and wonder much over Thy secret dispensation, most sweet Jesus. Why, I ask, dost Thou thus try me in strife so often and suddenly; when nevertheless Thou art wholly sweet and without bitterness? What I have said, the experienced know: they shall soon

experience, whoever desire to be Thy disciples. This comes not from guile; nor from want of knowledge: but from good zeal, for our secret profit. Therefore what I do not fully grasp, I trust it all rather to Thy wisdom: which does nothing without an assured motive: although the reason be unknown to me. I have however in this turn of things a no slight comfort of my misery: that my sweet Lady Mary also once lost Jesus, and greatly sorrowed to have lost her Son; nor was content to return home: until she had found Jesus, her only joy. Whom when she had not found where she thought: she found where she guessed not. For if she had known that He was seated with such admiration in the midst of the doctors; either she would have grieved less for such a happening: or she would have rejoiced over so grand an act: in the answers of her most blessed Son. And so Jesus is not always found where He is sought: but often He is there where He is least expected. Let no man therefore presume of himself, as if he alone had Jesus: let no man despise another; for HE KNOWS NOT HOW PLEASING HE MAY BE TO GOD IN SECRET: although he be unknown to men, and appear outwardly of no account. For Jesus also was Himself unknown to many then: and few suspected what or how great He was. He showed Himself to whom He would; and when He would, He concealed Himself: but He did all with order and to our profit. When therefore I shall lose Jesus, it is nothing strange or new; I feel however that it will be harmful to me: and very grievous to my heart. But I acknowledge myself guilty, and worthy of heavy scourging: for I have not sufficiently guarded my heart, but have walked too lukewarmly and carelessly; therefore have I lost the grace of Jesus: and I know not who will restore Him to me, unless He Himself deign again to have compassion on His poor servant. Bring aid to this my misfortune, most pitiful Mother of God; succour me, my Lady: be nigh, most dear Virgin Mary, entrance to life, gate of mercy. I seek comfort, I beg help from thee; thou knowest too well what a sorrow it is to have lost Jesus: and what joy to have found Jesus. If thus it was with thee, O most blessed Virgin, who wast without fault: what wonder if His grace be not always present as desired to me a sinner, who offend in so many points? What therefore shall I do: that I may find Him again? For if there be any hope of finding Him: it will certainly be by thy counsel; it will also be by thy merits: who art nearer, and dearer than all others. Teach me then the way to recover my beloved: and accompany me until I find Him. And when I have

seen and found Him: I will sing with thee in exultation. Rejoice with me all, for I have found Him Whom my soul loveth: for it is He Himself Whom thou didst bring forth, most chaste Virgin Mary.

To this she answers: "Listen to a good counsel; follow my example: and thy soul shall be comforted. If ever thou lovest Jesus, do not be downcast, or too much disturbed: do not grow slothful, do not cease from prayer, do not go forth in pursuit of exterior consolations; but seek privacy, bemoan thyself, and thou shalt find Jesus in the temple of thy heart: Whom thou hast lost by thy sins, taking pleasure in vain things. For Jesus is not found in the streets of the city; nor in the company of pleasure-seekers, nor of them that live at their ease on earth: but in the assembly of the just, and in the gathering of the saints. With groaning is He to be sought: Who was lost through dissipation. With great care is He to be kept: Who slipped away through want of watchfulness. With fear and reverence is He to be besought: Who HATES THE SLOTHFUL AND UNGRATEFUL. With DEEPEST HUMILITY IS HE TO BE RECALLED, Who was driven away by pride. With frequent and earnest prayer is He to be appeased: Who because of their wandering mind hears not them that mumble. With GREAT THANKSGIVING is He to be praised: Who is ready to bestow His grace. With MOST BURNING LOVE is He to be embraced: Who spares all, compassionates all; Who grants His gifts freely: and is proved to be wanting to no man that seeks Him. And if sometimes He delays: He does not however forsake him that perseveres in prayer; but even while he knows it not, revisits him, more fully enlightens, and INSTRUCTS TO GREATER PRUDENCE: THAT HE NEVER PRESUME OF HIMSELF, BUT ALWAYS HUMBLY AND DEVOUTLY TRUST IN HIM. If then thou dost attend to these things well, thou shalt speedily appease Jesus; thou shalt find Jesus in Jerusalem: for His place is established in peace. Jesus in the temple of thy heart shall preach the sacred words of His mouth; Jesus shall tarry the whole day WITH THEE AS IN A BRIDAL CHAMBER: JESUS SHALL TEACH THEE CONCERNING ALL THINGS THAT TOUCH SALVATION: of Whom certainly is all whatever there be of grace and virtue in angels and men: whatever also of good shines forth in creatures. Jesus therefore is always to be invoked, always sought: ever to be desired, ever to be remembered, ever to be praised: ever to be venerated, ever to be loved, NOR TO BE OFFENDED IN AUGHT; BUT IN ALL holiness and

purity to be served and worshipped: Who is above all God blessed for ever.
Amen.”

XI

OF FOUR WAYS OF SEEING JESUS, ACCORDING TO THE AFFECTION OF DEVOTION

BLESSED are the eyes: that see the things which you see. This sweet word of our Lord Jesus Christ, is often to be brought back to memory; to Whom the inner eyes of the mind should be raised in spirit: on Whom the angels long to gaze. For the sight of Him rejoices above all things; the enjoyment of Him fills every desire of the soul: His face beatifies all the saints in Heaven. But what shall they do, who are still in pilgrimage on earth; and cannot enjoy the glory of the eternal brightness? They shall see Him: but not yet. They shall see Him from afar: but not yet close at hand. For they see Him now by faith: but not yet by sight. For they see now in a glass in a dark manner: but then face to face. They see now in briefest moments: but then continually. They see now imperfectly and obscurely: but then clearly and openly. They see now truly; because they believe firmly and well: but then they shall see all fully without a veil. Blessed then those eyes which now behold Jesus in the light of faith: that hereafter they may see Him in His kingdom with the angels of God. For their conversation is in Heaven according to the spirit: although in the body they be still detained on earth.

But now tell me, devout and faithful soul, which lovest Christ with whole-hearted affection, and strivest to follow the footsteps of Christ; tell me, I say, if the choice were given thee and it were possible: in what form thou wouldst desire and prefer to see Jesus. Which would please thee more, if it were allowed to see Him. laid in the manger, or seated in the midst of the doctors, or preaching to the people, or also hanging on the cross? Which

of these dost thou affect more: which tastes sweeter, which touches more deeply? I am unwilling, she says, to make a choice in this matter; I DO NOT WISH TO BE MY OWN MASTER, I DO NOT WISH TO FOLLOW MY OWN INCLINATION, OR TO BE LED BY MY OWN EMOTIONS: BUT I WISH TO BE IN EVERY WAY CONTENTED WITH THE GOOD PLEASURE OF MY LORD JESUS CHRIST; Who can sound and invisibly penetrate the secret depths of my heart: so that He Himself be to me all in all, according to the need of my weakness. What therefore shall better please Him, that let Him do freely; in whatever manner He wishes to appear so let Him show Himself to me: for all that He does will be grateful. When I rightly consider, He is all to me in each; nor shall any change of figure or age alter the faith of truth: for Christ is undivided, truly to be worshipped in all these appearances. I feel that it will be safest for me: to stand by His decision without any will of my own. I have however a desire ceaselessly burning: lovingly to gaze upon Him. For it would certainly be a great and precious gift of grace: if He granted me to see but one of those which I have besought. Herein I accept beforehand His yea and nay: that it may be done unto me according to His word, in everything desirable or saddening without sin. Let Him but will and manifest Himself to me; I will not discuss the appearance of the human form: if only it be permitted to behold Him in the Godhead. But since this manner of beholding, is the highest and belongs to the blessed; meanwhile I shall be contented, like all the faithful, if I merit to see Jesus in the semblance of His humanity: as sometimes He has revealed Himself in secret vision to certain devout. Therefore, if He show Himself a babe lying in the cradle: I will wholly worship Him God emptied for me, a child in the flesh; I will praise and exult over the unheard-of gift of His so great love and littleness: full of all sweetness and joy. For whom would it not delight to see so gracious a little babe, honoured by angels' praises; to embrace so holy a Child, pure from all defilement: visited by the holy shepherds, reverently worshipped by the most noble Magi. Lo, this tastes sweeter and affects more tenderly; this fills with greater love my innermost soul rather than His other deeds and wonders: whereby He was made manifest in the world true God and man, wailing in a little crib. For this vision is needed a pure eye, a humble mind, a strong faith, a clean conscience; that the God of glory may be seen in frail flesh: and in the form of a slave, the Creator of Heaven and earth.

But what of the eternal Wisdom of the Father in the midst of the doctors hearing them, and answering their questions? Certainly it is delightful to behold the most beautiful boy of twelve years, adorned with all moral rectitude; darkened by no stain from the sole of His foot to the crown of His head: Who can now speak perfectly, and return answer, and give proof of His unblemished righteousness; so that the eyes of all were fixed upon Him in sudden wonder: and all desired to be refreshed by His presence and sweet discourse. Therefore I also long to gaze a while most intently upon the face of Jesus Christ: and mark what words of wisdom come from His mouth. Behold He sits in the midst of the doctors: the boy Jesus, the Lord of angels. He listens to teachers on earth, Who instructs the angels in Heaven. He asks questions of His elders: **THAT ALL THE YOUNG MAY LEARN TO HOLD THEIR PEACE AND BE REVERENT IN THE PRESENCE OF SENIORS.** He behaves Himself very modestly; He sits quietly, He is respectfully silent: when He is questioned, He responds discreetly: there is nothing light in His word or action: and in the midst of the wise; He shows forth a pattern of perfect maturity in the years of boyhood. If one had traversed all Jerusalem: thinkest thou he could have found such a child, so lovely and wise? By no means. Nor was there such a one in all the confines of Israel: even if Solomon and all the sons of the kings had been there. Verily there is none like to Him either in Heaven or on earth: or among all lawgivers and teachers. Wherefore it was not strange, if Mary sorrowed much: when she had lost her so dear Child, fair beyond all the children of men. For His face was bright with wondrous pleasantness; His eyes clear, His lips pure: His speech sweet, His answer full of wisdom. When He is silent, He edifies; when He answers, He instructs: virtuous is everything that He does and says. If He produces such sweet fruits in the bud; what will He bring forth in the ripeness of the harvest?

O how delightful it is to a loving soul to contemplate Jesus of Nazareth, the man approved of God, renowned among the people for His signs and wonders: and preaching to the disciples words of life, sweeter than the honey and the honeycomb. If it had been given me for only one day to converse with my Lord in the world, I should deem myself happy: nor should I ever forget that day, for the sublime teaching and lowly conversation of the Son of God with the children of men: Who shunned not the poor or the feeble: but was wont to eat even with publicans and sinners.

Alas how foolish is he: who, even for a short moment, turns away the eye of his heart from the light of this most holy example, kindled in the world. We must deem that HE WILL CONTINUE LONG UNLEARNED AND UNWISE, WHO CONFORMS NOT HIS LIFE TO THE HUMILITY OF THE HUMBLE GOD. Very well felt and wrote THE GREAT PAUL, enlightened by God, saying, "To me to live is Christ: and to die is gain." Therefore are my eyes ever to my Lord Jesus Christ: for He is my rule and my wisdom. For the perfection of all virtue shines forth in Him, as in a bright mirror; nor can anything better or more perfect in any book or science be discovered and known and contemplated: than in this book of life, and true light enlightening every man, AND TRANSPORTING INTO HIS LOVE ESPECIALLY THE POOR IN SPIRIT.

But above all precious perfumes, the Passion of my Lord Jesus Christ diffuses its sweet odour: containing in brief summary the treasure-store of all graces. Therefore it gives chiefest delight to behold Jesus hanging on the cross, and showing me the most holy wounds of His body: livid indeed with pain, but bright with love, beyond all His actions inducing compunction: so that save Jesus Christ and Him crucified, nothing pleases my mind to think, or read, or speak, or hear. May God do this to me and add this, Who refuses not His mercy to sinners, and is lovingly nigh and favourable to the affections of the devout: that the most sacred Passion of my Lord Jesus Christ never fade from my memory: but the grief and LOVE OF THE MOST LOVING CRUCIFIED pierce and wound my heart, and most mightily unite and inflame: so that the whole world grow vile to me, and Jesus crucified alone above all give relish: and more intimately and most frequently lead me unto the inner mysteries of His Passion.

In many other ways also, according to the desire of the loving soul, the dear Jesus can wondrously reveal Himself: and more fully instruct concerning His most holy life and precious death and the glory of His resurrection; so that what the sacred gospels teach and unfold in words outwardly: Jesus, coming in the spirit, Himself wisely and spiritually explains within, without noise of words, with great enlightenment of the supreme truth, unto the grasping even of the glory of the Godhead; as it is sometimes given to purified minds to enjoy by rapture of the spirit, for the comfort of human frailty: according to that which blessed Jesus Himself

promised saying, “I am the door; by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved: and he shall go in and shall go out, and shall find pastures.” Amen.

XII

OF THE SACRED INSTITUTION OF THE FAST, AFTER THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS CHRIST

BEHOLD now is the acceptable time: behold now is the day of salvation. The sacred season of Lent has come, wholesomely instituted by the Church: devoutly to be welcomed by all the faithful of Christ, but most of all by religious. Prepare thyself, therefore, servant of God, at this time to live with greater care, to fast more strictly, to pray more often, to sing psalms with greater diligence; so that on the day of the Lord's resurrection also thou mayest merit to rejoice with the Lord the more fully: the more abstemiously thou hast lived. Accept joyously the cross of the Lord: which the Saviour of the world willingly accepted for thee. For the cross is every affliction of the flesh and every mortification of sensuality; which must always be kept under: lest it wax strong against the spirit. This cross the love and grace of Christ makes light and sweet: Who, by His own example and the example of the saints, has delivered the pattern of abstinence. Fear not therefore, weak man: nor be too cowardly to fast. Christ is the motive: Christ has given the example: Christ also will aid to finish well: Who instituted so holy an observance. For what thou dost is for thyself: for thy salvation thou toilest, when thou dost fast. Why dost thou fear, flesh and blood? The holy men of old also had flesh and blood: who passed many seasons in abstinence. If it were not afflicting to the body, or burdensome to nature; how would it be called and be a time of penance? Penance therefore thou must do in this brief space of Lent unto the remission of the negligence of thy former life; and afflict thy soul for God, as compensation to the divine

justice: in watchings, in fasts, in prayers and labours, in silence and keeping of the cell; as also in other holy observances according to the practice of the Church: which now insists more strictly on the maceration of the flesh. For everywhere now she lengthens out the watches: multiplies the singing, prolongs the prayers, genuflects more frequently, bows more deeply: celebrates more fervently, worships more reverently, fasts more fully, reads more studiously, preaches more earnestly; puts on gravity, shows devotion, keeps righteousness, guards discipline: and increases every observance of holiness. For every soul, that is not afflicted this day, shall perish from her people: for she is not worthy to be numbered in the assembly of the saints: who would not imitate the life of the saints by abstinence. Now all thy former life is to be changed into better, and the flesh must be curbed with meet chastisements: so that at the time of the resurrection it may flourish again in newness of life. The days of our negligence are to be redeemed: and something more is to be demanded, in fervour of spirit for the affliction of the flesh. For the spirit it is that quickeneth: but the flesh profiteth nothing, that is the pleasure of the flesh. Cast then thy thought upon the Lord: and He shall nourish thee, rather with the word than with food. “For not in bread alone,” He saith, “doth man live: but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God.” The fear which thou feelest is thy self-love: more timid than it should be. Often an excessive fear, and anxiety of heart for the failing of the body afflict more than the actual fatigue of the toil itself. If it were not a little laborious; what great thing would it be then? To live according to the ease of nature: is not a life of penance. But to a fervent spirit and to one desirous of doing manfully: all that he doth seems small. For he is eager not only to cut off the superfluous and harmful: but to abstain also from many things that are lawful. Let thy soul therefore be strong and thy will ready to fast: for thou hast the example of many fasting together with thee. Set before thee now one day, and to morrow thou shalt more devoutly add another: and thus in God’s name thou shalt accomplish the rest. Is not so holy a fast to be deemed all light and brief for the kingdom of God and the love of Christ? There is no means of escape; and so what does it profit to be troubled much about it? Let sufficient for the day be the evil thereof, so as not to double thy troubles: but rather prepare thyself to undergo things more arduous. The more ready thou art, the lighter thou dost make it for thyself: and the more acceptable it shall be to God.

Haply, this shall be thy last fast in this life: and it will give thee great joy if accomplished well. How many fasted last year: who have now passed away from this world. It will be altogether pleasing to God: if, what in any case must needs be done, be done willingly and cheerfully.

Casting aside therefore the fear of the flesh: manfully and readily enter upon the wholesome fast. Walk in the spirit of freedom: and anxiety for the flesh shall not possess thee. Look well into the examples of the holy prophets, Moses and Elias and Daniel: whose abstinence from food was wonderful, and to whom long periods of solitude were dear. Look also to the most blessed John Baptist, a youth of most excellent conversation, whom the Holy Ghost filled from his mother's womb: leading him at an early age into the wilderness: where with great abstinence and austerity of life he dwelt long in solitude. Then look to our Lord Jesus Christ above all the saints, and put Him before thee as a singular example of abstinence: how He, the Saint of saints, the King of kings and the Creator of the ages, the Sanctifier and Founder of all seasons, endured a fast of forty days and as many nights, eating nothing in the meanwhile: teaching thee by His most holy example to fast, and combat bravely against the temptations of the devil. For what would not become bearable, what not lovable by His example? Who certainly is believed to have fasted rather for thee, than for Himself. And consider not only His fast: but see that thou take His long solitude also as an example for thyself: how He bided secretly in the desert, lived most meekly with the wild beasts, and was thrice tempted by the devil: showing a pattern of solitary life, flight from the world, avoidance of tumult; frequent prayer, love of contemplation, leisure in God, retirement and self-custody.

O if for some little time thou hadst stood there with the Lord Jesus, apart from all human fellowship; would it not have been very sweet to thee to have eaten nothing those days? O how happy wouldst thou have been, if thou couldst have led a hermit's life with the Son of God: and enjoyed the company of Him, to Whom the angels ministered. Where thinkest thou was His little hut, or the cave that sheltered Him: or what kind of matting was spread under His body? He sits upon the ground, He sleeps and reposes upon the ground: Who rules Heaven and earth. Behold Him now seated, now standing: now bending His knees in prayer to God, His Father almighty. Accompany Him therefore in the grace of devotion: and willingly

abide alone with Him in His solitude, having Jesus only for thy comfort; for Jesus alone is better fellowship for thee: than the whole choir of angels in Heaven. In sooth he is never alone, or wholly forsaken: with whom the most sweet Jesus tarries. For without Jesus: the whole world is a weariness and a burden. Learn from Him how patient and meek He is in this vast solitude: how luminous a path He shows religious to retirement: instructing that they must first take leisure in God and themselves, before going forth into public.

Ask of Him, however, the reason of this life and say, “What art Thou doing here, Lord Jesus? Why dost flee men; Who canst not come to any harm from men? Why dost Thou shun the crowd: Who canst not be disturbed by any? For what end also dost Thou so severely fast, and thus chastise Thy sacred flesh; seeing that there is nought in Thee, that needs to be curbed? Or is it for our sakes and for our salvation that Thou dost these things?” “Truly is it so. For the sake of My elect I do and suffer all: that they also may obtain salvation. For I came to give all an example how to live: proving in My own person by what way, with how much toil, and with what fruit the kingdom of rejoicing with Me for ever is attained.”

But I beseech Thee, Lord, abandon me not in the wilderness of this world: but be to me a cloud by day, as a shade from the heat of temptations: and a pillar of fire by night, to scatter the darkness of my mind. May my Lord, or His angel ever go before me; and lead me into the land flowing with milk and honey: that is to the tasting of interior sweetness. “I,” saith He, “will accomplish thy prayer: if thou wilt follow My holy manner of life. I have shown the way of penance: which leads to eternal glory. Follow Me through toil and tribulation: if thou wilt have repose and consolation. I fasted, I hungered, I was tempted and I resisted: I contemned the world and its glory, I overcame the devil and his counsel; that thou also by My example mayest learn to fast, watch, and pray, to despise the world, resist the devil, subdue the flesh: and continue in obedience even unto death. If therefore I have toiled so much for thy salvation, and endured such great abstinence, Who was and lived without sin; how much more shouldst thou, who wast born in sin, and still hast the concupiscence of sin, macerate thy flesh, and cut off every occasion of guilt? Endeavour then according to thy power to fulfil the law of fasting imposed on thee: hating rather the inordinate appetite of the stomach than the need of nature. I will gladly

accept thy willing offering; and although it be little that thou dost, still a humble and clean oblation is ever pleasing to Me.”

XIII

OF TAKING UP NOW A MORE FERVENT AMENDMENT OF LIFE

THE days of penance have come to us: unto the remission of our sins and the salvation of our souls. Blessed be God Who has provided us with the season and the method of doing some penance for our sins. For thus we merit His mercy: and also fuller grace and glory. O sacred time of penance, given unto salvation to all men; putting an end to vice, preparing the way for virtue, bringing in compunction, nourishing devotion: shaking off tepidity, renewing fervour, and arousing to every good. O fervour of devotion, O desire of amendment, now show thy power: and let that appear in effect, which thou hast first conceived in mind. Would that now thou wouldst overcome perfectly if only one vice: or unlearn some bad habit. O if thou wouldst now go up but one step in virtue: or wouldst gain some special grace from the Lord. If now thou dost not toil for thy perfection; when then wilt thou make progress, and when wilt thou correct any failing? For seldom at other times is he proved religious: whoever is not found religious at this season. At other times it is praiseworthy to be on one's guard against what is unlawful: but now it is blamable not to abstain from what is lawful. A holy season demands a holy manner of life: and the many thousand examples of the faithful encourage the more to imitation. If now it becomes every Christian to live more holily; how much more the religious, who ought to show a pattern of holiness and abstinence to others? Fresh devotion therefore is to be taken up, and greater watchfulness is to be exercised over the senses: and a perfect amendment of the whole man, interior and exterior, is to be pursued. Let the mind be devout, prayer pure; meditation frequent, reading earnest, speech seldom and useful, solitude

pleasant and enduring: toil in the hands, piety in the intention, Christ ever in the heart. Now also a more careful watch must be kept against the wiles of the enemy: who is wont more bitterly at this time to seek out and tempt the devout; if haply he may render them tepid, or impatient: that their toil may become useless, or penance a burden, or the choir wearisome. Nor is it strange if he dare to tempt us: who feared not to tempt Christ, the Lord. But the wretch departed vanquished and confounded; that hope of victory might be given us: and that we might not fear the devil, who have with us Christ, his conqueror. Let us then manfully resist: and abide constant in all adversities. Certainly it is not without reason that so often we sing in Church: “let us commend ourselves in much patience through the armour of the power of the justice of God.” Very necessary is patience now; for many things come contrary to nature: which cannot be borne without interior grace. One thing burdens one man more, and another, another: according to what each feels is more contrary to his nature, or habits. And so he is happy and wise: who at this time is brave, and armed with patience. For it is an excellent remedy not to give way to fear, nor to turn one’s back to the enemy: but to do manfully, and to be cheerfully willing to bear worse for the Lord. For thus acted the holy men, our glorious fathers burning with the love of God, who instituted these observances: and left them to us to do likewise. Finally, our Lord Jesus Christ underwent the grievous torments of the cross: and exhibited to us His patience for our consolation and perpetual imitation. Whoever therefore is now more devout in all things: there is no doubt that he will more joyously welcome the holy pasch. Whoever now is more mortified and more solicitous for his interior progress: assuredly, when the Lord rises, he will more gladly exult with Him.

O good Jesus, sweet guest and faithful friend; give heed to my desires and groanings: strengthen me, a weakling, in this holy fast, consecrated as a law by Thee. Give strength of mind and the grace of interior fullness: so that this bodily fasting may be the cleansing of my sins. Grant me so to abstain from bodily food: that in my mind I may fast from all vices and passions. Defend me from the cunning foe; who by every means strives to hinder the purpose I have conceived: and to draw me back from holy fervour. Give me Thy right hand, good Jesus; so that without weariness, without elation, without distraction of heart in Thy presence I may chant in

the choir this holy time: and with all fidelity offer Thee the tithe of my days.
Amen.

XIV

OF THE GOING UP OF MOSES INTO MOUNT SINAI

AND Moses went up into the mountain: and he was there forty days and forty nights. What, thinkest thou, did this holy man there with the Lord? Who will manifest to me this mystery? O if I had been present: that I might have merited to hear Moses speaking with the Lord. For Moses spoke: and the Lord answered. He therefore enjoyed there alone the conversation of God: drawn far away from the fellowship of men. There he received the law of the decalogue: there he beheld the secrets of God and many mysteries of our faith. He learnt there in secret: what things afterwards he was to teach the people. There he was taught concerning the making of the tabernacle: the sacrificial rite, and the priestly order. There in spirit he knew and understood, what those exterior and visible institutions signified: and what they mystically foreshadowed of the future. There, free from all worldly cares, he took leisure and saw how sweet is the Lord: how blessed is the man who reposes on His holy mount. There suffering no weariness of body: he was refreshed with the bread of life and understanding. Whence from the long dwelling and constant speaking with the Lord on the mount, that wondrous thing befell him: that his face became resplendent from the sight of God, and seemed horned to them that beheld it; so that the children of Israel could not look upon him, but departed in terror, until he had placed a veil upon himself: and thus tempered the brightness of his countenance to the onlookers. O man of God, glorious and noble: overflowing and penetrated with the light of the divine brightness within and without. Thus also certain devout lovers of Christ, when they are in secret contemplation with the Lord, sometimes are transformed into the brightness of a new life;

and carry away with them such an abundance of grace that they fill others with admiration and fear: because of the zeal of their fervour and the wealth of the heavenly teaching which they utter. But for fear they should seem too overwhelming to the weak, PRUDENTLY THEY CONCEAL THE GRACE OF THE DIVINE VISITATION; they discourse humbly only of those things which may profit and be better understood: but the things that are hidden and sublime they keep within their secret breast; TO GOD ALONE AND THEMSELVES THEY DESIRE THESE TO BE KNOWN: TO WHOM ALSO THEY OFFER FROM THEIR INMOST HEART THE MOST ARDENT THANKS.

O if thou also couldst go up with Moses into the mountain of virtue, and, now during this holy season, tarry there somewhat with the Lord: to listen to the voice of God speaking from the midst of the cloud and the darkness; perchance to thee also would be given some special grace of divine knowledge and enlightenment of mind: whereby inebriated and filled, thou wouldst neglect all earthly things, AND LOVE ONLY THE HIGHER THINGS OF HEAVEN; so that thou wouldst think little of bodily food, but wouldst rather taste by experience in thyself, how true is that word of Moses, saying: that “not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God.”

But why is it that only Moses is bidden go up, and with him a few of the elders of Israel? Namely, the fewness of the perfect, and the sublimity of the contemplative life is expressed herein: for the vast multitude of men love rather to be engaged in things earthly and of the senses. Not one however went up into the summit of the mountain, nor entered the midst of the darkness in which God was: save only Moses, called with a special grace by the Lord, and bidden enter unto Himself, to whom it is said, “Come up to Me in the mount: and be there.” He is called by grace, he goes up by obedience: he remains by stable perseverance. It is not expedient to go up, unless grace go before, which lifts the mind from all low pleasure; and then it behoves to follow the lead of grace even to the unitive fruition of God, and there rest from all consideration; until again by the ordering of the Lord the soul go down to the works of charity. For Moses also, after long dwelling with the Lord, is bidden go down for the sake of teaching the people, over whom he was placed in pastoral care; that it may be shown that every man, who sublimely and sweetly reposes in God: after tasting this

sweetness, must return again usefully and humbly to works of piety. And thus by going up and coming down he shall always find his perfection; so that he never rest idle: but is intent either within on God, or without on the profit of the neighbour. “Go, get thee down,” saith the Lord: “thy people hath sinned.” Devotion held him near to God: the people’s danger compelled him to return again to outer things. He went up by contemplation: he came down again through compassion. The love of God drew him upwards: the love of the neighbour recalled him down. On the mount he thought only of heavenly things: below he restrained strifes and contentions. There he clearly saw the Lord: here he was seldom free from the tumult of the people. There he was rapt above himself in the spirit: here he was often vexed with great weariness because of them. There he was delighted with spiritual things: here he was weighed down by things of the flesh. There he received divine revelations: here below he frequently heard murmurings. There he was devout and at peace: here he strove to be mild and patient. O how good and pleasant it is to be with God on the mount: and to have care of no external things. O how wretched and pitiable is that state, to be engaged in worldly affairs: and entangled in passing employments. HAPPY THE MIND WHICH no worldly business holds back, nor any affection of the flesh draws down: but which A PURE INTENTION EVER UPLIFTS TO GOD WITHOUT DELAY.

XV

OF THE WORDS OF JESUS, AND CLEANNESS OF HEART

THE words that I have spoken to you: are spirit and life. If thou desirest to take the holy words of Jesus, turn thyself to interior things: and learn to walk in the spirit. For in the words of Jesus there is life: and in such there is the life of thy spirit. Jesus indeed is the light of ignorance: and the only solace of grief. Listen therefore to the word which proceeds from the mouth of God: and from the lips of blessed Jesus. For the most pure Jesus saith, “Blessed are the clean of heart: for they shall see God.” A sublime word: because uttered by the Most High. A great promise: but assured by the supreme Truth. Blessed are the clean of heart. O sweet saying: which rightly calls the soul to the promise of blessedness; since God is the reward: and nothing of earth is mentioned here. If the promised bliss delights; let cleanness of heart delight also: that thou mayest see the God of gods in Sion. Let thy whole attention be watchful to cleanse the heart: and let thy prayer be frequent and fervent. For the pure heart has: an infinite good promised to it. Despise the world then: and thou shalt gain Heaven. Forsake creatures: and thou shalt find the Creator. Leave aside things of time: and eternal things shall be given thee. Heaven and earth cannot be weighed in a like balance: nor can God be enjoyed together with creatures. Who leans on things created: he is hindered from taking leisure in God. He who is clean from worldly things and free from passions: becomes worthy of the heavenly vision. For the more clean a man is: the more pleasing to God is he. God is light: and He loves the lightsome. God is purity: and He casts away the impure. Instable is the love of the world; and every material enjoyment void of content: but what abides for ever, this is the true good of

the soul. The love of the supreme good increases: as every earthly thing is despised. Joy will rise to thee interiorly: if thou bravely struggle with vice. And when thou seekest without nothing that passes away: the splendour of the eternal light will shine more brightly. The needs of nature are burdensome to a holy man: but to a chaste heart the pleasure of the flesh is as a torment of hell. For carnal delights beget nought else: but the flames of hell eternal. God grant thee to escape these: and to preserve the dignity of angelic purity. A very great aid to cleanness of heart are perfect contempt of the world; self-denial for the love of Christ: and frequent meditation on the Incarnate Word. Cleanse therefore the mirror of the heart: if thou desirest to gaze upon God. It is most delightful to contemplate the eternal truth and wisdom. The wholesome reformation of the inner man leads to the state of a purer life. But a curious pursuit of the things of the senses: beguiles and confuses the mind. Thou art eagerly drawn to taste interior things by that desirable peace of mind: which they sweetly enjoy, who pass their life in purity. If thou aimest at having the pleasures of this purity; beware of restlessness: and cut off the occasions of unrest. Wish for nothing high, nothing dainty, nothing curious, nothing passing: and thou hast cast away the chief causes of disturbance. He indeed who has turned his back on everything of time; freely advances towards God. For he that is bound by no tie: easily rises to Heaven, when he prays. Neither the weight of the world, nor the softness of the flesh: can hold him back. The keeper of a pure conscience: also passes safely through the powers of the air. Very desirable is this purity of heart: which makes friends to itself of God and the angels. For this grace of the beatitude we must struggle bravely: pray frequently: and toil unweariedly. The beatitude of purity is established in the valley of humility; it is acquired by prayers: and nourished by tears. O how pleasing and beautiful is this virtue, which rises above all passions: and longs to be united with the impassible God. For every evil thing yields to purity: every created thing is subject to it. For it treats with God without exception or reserve: therefore it cannot be vanquished: but in the Almighty it surpasses all things. The things above minister to it: and the things below work together unto its good. The demons flee from it; the angels zealously serve it: the carnal fear it, the spiritual embrace it. Holy David after the humble confession of his sins: begs that cleanness of heart be given him, saying, "Create a clean heart in me, O God." He weeps over the crimes he has

committed, he reproaches himself that he has acted foolishly: he prays that the fall of the flesh be burnt out: so that he may once more be found pure in God's sight, and be filled with the joy of salvation: nor ever again relapse to evil deeds. This cleanness of heart is a ladder most straight, most glorious, most strong, touching the summit of Heaven, and reaching to the vision of the glory of God: this glory is to all His saints.

O most beautiful Jesus, Author of all purity, Who hast promised eternal joys to the clean of heart: grant me ever to possess this virtue, chosen and precious, brighter than gems and gold: so that with all contagion of sin far removed, with a free mind I may pleasingly serve Thee in the frail flesh; and utterly cast away whatever may hinder purity: and with all my desires strive to cleave to Thee, as long as I live, a poor wretch, amid the storms of the world: until Thou dost bid me stand in Thy sight: and then according to Thy great mercy do Thou deign to be merciful unto me.

XVI

OF THE LOVE OF JESUS AND SELF-DENIAL

HE that loveth his life: shall lose it. These words speaketh the most loving Jesus: desirous to part thee from the cares and pleasures of the world. Lo, love and loss. The eternal Word of the Father declares it: He does not deceive thee, but He looks to thy salvation. The love of the world is the loss: the love of Jesus, the redemption of the soul. The love of the flesh is folly: the love of Jesus, wisdom. The love of the creature lessens the love of the Creator: the love of the Creator gives leave to all creatures to go their way. For they do not savour the same: nor rightly agree. Self-love is full of fear and anguish: self-denial, ineffable freedom. Self-love is an interior malady: which is seldom cured, unless God be loved perfectly. Self-contempt is a sign of salvation; and he who commences with self-contempt: will be made perfect in the love of Jesus. Self-love darkens the heart, begets strife, and destroys progress. But who denies himself for the sake of Jesus: he is free and at peace. The love of Jesus is safe and strong: it knows not the soft and self-seekers. The love of Jesus gives all that it is and has: nor seeks save what it knows to be pleasing to God. If thou wilt be fully cleansed and enlightened in spirit: despise thyself and all things for Jesus' sake. Let every great thing in the world be nothing to thee, every pleasant thing bitter: that God alone and sweet Jesus may be sweet to thee above all things. What is in truth the love of Jesus, if not contempt of thyself and all things for the sake of His love? And this it is that finds itself, and every good in God. Thou wilt save thy soul: despise now the present life. If now thou wilt hold on to the rough way: thou shalt go into eternal life. The word of denial, and of the loss of the present life seems hard to the carnal and worldly; but to

the lovers of Christ it savours sweeter than the honey and the honeycomb: because true self-denial for God's sake makes ready an everlasting kingdom. The love of Jesus can bear present evils: and is strong to break from temporal ease. It fears not to be held in small esteem: and desires not honours. It can hold its peace in face of insults: nor thinks of returning the like to them that injure it. The love of Jesus possesses an invisible consolation: it awaits a fruit that will never wither. "I," He saith, "have chosen you from the world, calling by My grace: that you should go out from yourselves, abandoning your own will: and bring forth the fruit of charity, loving Me above all things: and that your fruit should remain, reigning with Me in eternal blessedness." But the fruit of the flesh is death: which the worm that dieth not follows and everlasting fire. From which may He protect us, Who has taught us to despise the world, and overcome the flesh: Christ Jesus, our love and our redemption. Amen.

XVII

OF FOLLOWING THE POVERTY OF JESUS, AND CASTING ASIDE CARE FOR TEMPORAL THINGS

THE foxes have boles, and the birds of the air nests: but the Son of man bath not where to lay His head. This word of Jesus is frequently to be pondered by thee, and carefully set in thy heart: who dost affect to lead a religious life. Jesus commends to thee the nobility of His holy poverty, whereby is gained the kingdom of Heaven: which also He Himself poor in the world chose and most strictly observed. Yea, He desires thee to seek no earthly comfort: for neither did He have any temporal repose here: nor built Himself on earth a material home to shelter Him. The animals have their dens to retire, and the birds their nests or crevices to rest: but Jesus set up for Himself no tents at all: nor secured for Himself, by means of another, lodging or board. But He lived as a poor beggar: He passed the way of the world as a pilgrim in haste: He departed as a stranger from a foreign land. The eternal Wisdom built not itself a house made of hands in the towns or cities, nor rented in the fertile places outside the city; but content with the common lodging of His friends, He followed the simplicity of the poor in all things: and nowhere took pleasure in the lofty tents of sinners. But what was given Him for His sustenance; this He placed in the common fund: and entrusted to the keeping of another. He desired to have nothing of His own for Himself: and used sparingly those things that natural need required. If perchance aught remained over of gifts or food: this He had distributed to the poor. Likewise He forbade superfluous care for things to His perfect

followers: but to weaker brethren with considerate gentleness He allowed the necessities of life.

Peter once urged Him to build three tabernacles, when, beside himself, he enjoyed the heavenly vision on the mount, delighted with the resplendent presence of Christ and the company of holy Moses and Elias: but because he begged what was less befitting, in this petition he was not heard; for the dwelling of Christ and the blessed is not in earthly tabernacles, nor in corporeal images: but in the happy mansion of the heavenly kingdom, which surpasses all sense and thought of mortal men. And indeed the Maker of Heaven and earth, Jesus, called the carpenter's son, could easily build a house or temple to His name even without ax or adze: but the heavenly master and artificer of all the virtues did not come down to the depths for the sake of reforming material things; for He took thought, not of stocks and stones, nor of oxen and sheep, nor of farms and rents: but of healing, instructing, and redeeming souls. However, He declared His power by more mighty works, accomplishing cures by a light touch or a single word; He also taught wisdom by good deed and discourse: speaking of the kingdom of God, warning against the perishing joys of the world: He gathered the simple and lowly, and the proud rich He sent empty away.

Do thou also therefore lay aside all useless anxiety for temporal things, nor occupy thyself excessively with resources for the future: but cast thy thought upon the Lord and think on heavenly things. Neither toil eagerly for the necessities of life: that later thou may mayest have abundance. Leave others also to work for themselves: that they may have whereby to live. Labour rather for thy soul and for acquiring grace: than that the flesh be well nourished, which is to be devoured by worms. See that thou sweat not too much for temporalities: and neglect thyself in spiritual exercises. It is well to seek the common good: but the spiritual rather than the earthly. It is well to eat bread in the sweat of the brow: but be not unmindful of the heavenly bread. "Make use of thy own labour in the days of thy vanity," saith the Wise One: "lest perchance thou leavest all to an idle and ungrateful man." Thou canst not alone enrich all posterity: nor guard against all losses. Endeavour rather to leave after thee an example of virtue: than a sufficiency of worldly income. How knowest whether it is expedient for thee and others to have more? Do not desire what is unsafe. For the desire will never be sated: nor is cupidity ended by the value of things. Do thou follow the

poverty of Christ; and be content with the moderation of nature: for the love of Him, Who would not have either farms, or rents, or coffers, or houses. Alack, many waste their days in useless anxiety; little or seldom turn themselves to interior things: and become utterly insensible within. Lift up thy heart: cleave not with the brute beasts to things of the earth. Thou art to be fed with the food of angels: the word of God is the nourishment of souls. This is the bread of life which the Lord Jesus shall give thee: lest thou faint in the wilderness. The good and loving Master Who has promised things eternal: will not deny the temporal. Do thou seek the heavenly things: and He doubtless will add what is necessary, whilst thou art in this life.

XVIII

OF THE WEARINESS OF JESUS AND HIS SAVING DOCTRINE

JESUS, being wearied with His journey: sat on the well. The most patient Jesus deigned to be wearied for us. He did not use a carriage or a chariot or a horse, when He walked the earth: but in the name of the Lord He went on foot. Once we read He mounted an ass, and for a short space rode on an ass: rather as a pattern of humility than for the enjoyment of ease: not to gain honour: but to fulfil the word of the prophet. He showed therefore a good example to holy preachers and religious persons, that they travel not with pomp on horseback; nor incur heavy expenses on their journey: lest they scandalize seculars, and give rise to complaints in their monasteries. Give heed here, religious brother, to Jesus wearied with His journey: not passing along to walk about for recreation. And if it is necessary to take recreation, go not out into the public places nor a long distance: lest by thy wandering thou give offence to others. But turn aside into the portion of the lot of the saints, where thou mayest hear the word of God: or behold examples of holiness. He spends an evil recreation: who loses joy of conscience. He is very empty within and possessed of little devotion: who is found willingly ready to wander abroad. Esau, a man skilled in hunting, while he tarries outside in the field: is deprived of his hereditary rights. But Jacob, a simple man and abiding in the tent, while he humbly obeys his mother, and restrains his feet from wandering: with wondrous readiness receives his father's blessing. The skilful one is deceived in his ways, placing his hope in bow and quiver: the simple man, intent on God, the man without plaint, was aided in his need. They are wont to be slow for excursions and worldly business: who have a more diligent care for their interior. But slothful

minds are dissipated daily: and are brought to loss of mastery over themselves by frequency of cares, or the violence of troubles. He, who wishes to be cured of this wandering, and to recover the light of the heart: let him be earnestly on the watch: ponder the end of his days, and the hour of the severe judgement.

Learn also in this act of Jesus: that virtue is to be exercised with discretion. For to be wearied in the community toil, at the call of charity, or the mandate of obedience: is a sign of virtue and of no little merit. But to pause at a befitting time, and refresh the body with food, or instruct the soul by sacred reading: is the discreet ruling of both inner and outer man. Weariness then for the Saviour's name should be bearable, and not shunned by the devout: since multitudes almost beyond number weary themselves for the world. But let the toil be discreet, lest it break down our weakness: or render us unfit for things divine. For what is moderate: endures better. It is right well lawful at times to go and sit a while for the renewal of one's strength: and to be mindful of one's own weakness. For Jesus Himself after the weariness of the journey sat on the well: awaiting food, and humbly asking for a drink of water.

In this place of the well we should also consider the doctrine of Jesus, profitable for the moral life. It teaches thee what thou shouldst do when thou givest over toiling: and what kind of recreation is to be sought. For, even if thou canst not labour longer, it is not becoming to give ear to idle stories, or take pleasure in sleep: or wander about through the offices. What then? Thou shouldst sit on the well; seek the comfort of the spirit: and with the Samaritan woman eagerly beg the gifts of saving wisdom. Look into the streams of holy Writ, and turn over what thou hast read; that thou mayest renew thy soul, cast off sloth: avoid idleness, and acquire fresh compunction. Let the tongue be silent without: that the mind may be nourished within. Weary not of praying often: and meditating on the loving Jesus. Learn to pass from material to interior things: and to rise from creatures to the praise of the Creator. For thus also did Jesus Himself, For taking occasion of this earthly well, and the question of the woman, who happened to come: He began to preach the word of salvation, and to pour out a stream of heavenly grace. She sought the water of the well: but carried away rejoicing the doctrine of life from the heavenly torrent. So refreshed and delighted was she with the discourse of the most sweet Jesus: that,

forgetting her pitcher, she ran to tell her townspeople the wonderful works of God. And this is a sign of a great grace gained; when a man, reading, praying and meditating, is so touched: that unmindful of present ease, he burns wholly in the love of the fountain of life. Of which holy David with thirsting breast thus sings, “My soul hath thirsted after God, the living spring.”

Again, when the disciples, coming from the city, urged Jesus to eat: He showed that the bread of obedience, which most agreeably nourishes the soul subject to God, is to be preferred to all bodily food. There is indeed no drink sweeter than heavenly grace; which cleanses the defiled, waters the parched: and refreshes the tempted. Nor is any more delicious food tasted, or richer banquet placed before the eyes of the lover, than the fulfilment of the will of Heaven: as the most obedient Jesus Himself saith, “My meat is: to do the will of Him that sent Me.” For to seek the good pleasure of God in what is to be done, is sweet above all else to the lover: and nourishes the obedient disciple well and refreshes with spiritual joy because of the merit of obedience. Thus Elias penetrating the vast wilderness, and willingly remaining by himself, instructed by the angel arose and eat: and while he fulfilled the command of the angel: he walked in the strength of that food unto the mount of God. For true obedience leads with little toil to the summit of perfection, to the mount of eternal rest: where there is full refreshment from all heat and toil, and possession of entire blessedness in the presence of the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, with the enjoyment of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

XIX

OF THE WRITING OF JESUS AND HIS MERCY TOWARDS THE SINFUL WOMAN

BUT Jesus bowing Himself down: wrote with His finger on the ground. The lovable Jesus, gentle teacher, true master, just judge, and compassionate Saviour, is narrated to be a writer: Who wrote not with ink, but with His finger on the ground. A good writer, Who wrote out mercy for the poor: and granted pardon to the sinner. Nor did He act contrary to the law: when He tempered the severity of the law. For the miserable need mercy: and justly is forgiveness granted to the truly penitent. O how beautiful a writing, and how skilled is this finger of God: when it soothed with words of clemency the sinner steeped in sorrow: and wisely silenced the malicious conspirators, eager for vengeance, unyielding to mercy: and by His words showed them to be worthy of confusion, saying, "He that is without sin among you: let him first cast a stone at her." This against the accusers: and for the deliverance of the penitent from the mouth of the wolves. And now, good Jesus, what sayest Thou to the woman? Guilty of sin she awaits a good word, pronounce Thy sentence; she submits herself to Thy judgement: give a comforting answer. As Thou hast ever been wont to have compassion: so also now. "Neither will I," He saith, "condemn thee." What could be more gentle and more liberal unto the granting of forgiveness? Be consoled, guilty conscience: listen to the word of such loving compassion. If God be for thee, who shall stand against thee? Christ Jesus it is, Who justifies: who is he that shall condemn? And what wilt thou do further; what wilt thou offer in compensation for thy sin? Thou repentest

of the crime committed: but a greater care is to be taken against future sins, before thou departest. “Go,” saith the most gentle Jesus: “and now sin no more.” What could be shorter, and more full unto remission: and to the satisfaction of perfect penance? Who knows hearts: He knew how much sorrow the sinful woman had. Jesus therefore used more abundant clemency, lest she should be overwhelmed by too grievous a sadness: who, having been publicly accused, suffered great shame for her fault.

Thou hast heard the clemency of the Saviour with its great consolation for sinners: strive thou also to acknowledge thy faults, and worthily to bewail them before, seized by the most wicked spirits, thou be forced in the future judgement to render an account of all. Say with the publican, “O God be merciful to me a sinner.” Nor distrust the mercy of the Redeemer: if only for the future thou desirest with all thy strength to guard against thy past sins: and perfectly to amend thy life.

Consider also in this act of Jesus, what He did by writing. Nor wonder that He knew how to write: nor ask with the Jews, whence He learnt to read and write: since He learnt not letters from man. Such questioning is foolish; and a lying, fictitious insinuation concerning the school of Jesus: for the Wisdom of God needed not the teaching of man, Who was born into this world to enlighten all the sons of men. And it was not merely easy to Him to read and write of Himself: but also of a sudden without any noise of words to render unlettered men, the Apostles namely, most skilled in all knowledge of tongues. And what wonder, if the Author of life fully knew the characters invented by mortals: Who most clearly beholds the secretest things of hearts and mysteries hidden from the ages. However it is pleasant to hear that Jesus knew how to read, and wrote: that the art of writing and the love of reading holy books may give greater delight. Which art many of the saints learnt; and with mouth and hand most diligently exercised, during their life in the flesh: and they very greatly enlightened holy Church by their writings. Jesus therefore was a splendid teacher, an excellent preacher; author and lover of the Scriptures: exemplary in conduct, edifying in words, and wondrous in signs. Let it please thee therefore to imitate Jesus reading, writing, and fulfilling the other observances of holy religion; so that thou mayest edify others by living worthily to God: who art not suited for preaching. A VERY GOOD WORK it is to write books which Jesus loves: in which He is studied, read, and preached. And there is no doubt that thou

shalt be loved by Him and richly rewarded: if thou diligently write books for the Church to the honour of God, and the profit of the neighbour. If he lose not his reward, who offers a cup of cold water to the thirsty man; what great reward shall he receive, who, by writing, provides the water of saving wisdom for the soul, which is to live for ever? For as many letters as thou dost duly form: so many victims of praise dost thou offer to God. It is meritorious therefore and devout to labour at writing books, and to keep them in great reverence and careful custody; by means of which the Divine Office is daily celebrated: and whereby the seed of manifold instruction is sown.

For sacred books are the weapons of clerics, the ornament of churches: the wealth and treasure of doctors, the bugle of priests; the comfort of religious, the banquet of the devout, the legacy of the saints: the light of the faithful, the nursery of virtues, the organ of the Holy Ghost. To write books then is a labour pleasing to God, to read them is profitable, to teach them praiseworthy: to preach them wholesome. But who would read, or preach unless he first knew the writings of the saints: and unless a writer had first written them? Blessed then the hand of the writer: and blessed the fingers engaged in such toil. By His example Jesus teaches thee, writing on the ground: that thou also mayest willingly write the words of God; which while one reads, and another preaches: thou shalt gain a very great reward from the manifold fruit of the labours of thy hands. By the gift of Our Lord Jesus Christ the Rewarder of all the good; with Whom all the hairs of our head are numbered: and not a single letter written can be lost. Ah, happily, amen.

XX

OF KEEPING HUMILITY FROM THE CONSIDERATION OF OUR OWN WEAKNESS

WHEN you have done all the things that are commanded you: say, “We are unprofitable servants.” The present word of Our Lord Jesus Christ instructs us much to the guarding of humility: and to the shutting out of all vain glory and swelling. It especially warns the desirous of high places, to be mindful of their own weakness and negligence; and not to boast of their deeds, although well done according to the judgement of men; but, fearful of the judgement of God above them, rather humbly to implore His mercy: than presume on their own merits. For thus the holy and humble David, tremblingly calls to God: “Enter not into judgement with Thy servant: for in Thy sight no man living shall be justified.” See how base should be thy esteem of thyself: how seriously thou shouldst fear the judgement of Heaven: who art far from the holiness of David, the great King and prophet. Neither king, nor prophet, nor holy, nor chosen according to God’s heart: hast thou ever merited to be called as was he. He, however, fulfilled the word of Our Lord, acknowledging himself an unprofitable servant: even calling himself an insect, a dog and a worm: having no high thought of himself after his mighty deeds. Bring back to memory the evils thou hast perpetrated: the vices of the present, the dangers of the future: and thou shalt not be by any means high-minded: but shalt rather fear, and declare thyself base and useless. God has no need of thy service, even if thou dost well; nor wilt thou worthily please Him: unless thou know thyself unworthy and unprofitable. “When,” He says, “you have done all the things that are

commanded you: say, ‘We are unprofitable servants.’ ” If when thou hast done all the things that are commanded, thou must say this, and hast no right to glory in aught; how vile and unworthy must thou think thyself, when thou failest and fallest short in so many things daily: and scarcely bringest anything to perfection. When hast thou been able for one day or hour, to live so uprightly and guardedly in the sight of God and men: as to overlook nothing of those things that it behoved thee and became thee to do? So great is human weakness: that these things do not escape defilement even that are praised in the judgement of men as just. Put aside therefore all vain complacency and pride: and take heed of the abundance of thy own unprofitableness. Be mindful of the depravity and inconstancy of thy thoughts; and thou shalt find that thou art not only useless unto good: but liable to much evil, and worthy of reproach and punishment. But this is the only remedy and comfort for the troubled spirit: that for such numberless negligences and sinful stains, a man humble himself in truth, and esteem himself inferior to all and useless; carefully redeeming his past sins and daily negligences with the coin of confession and the shield of a good will: and often being instant in devout prayer. Set thyself then manfully against inrushing vice: for so much does a man make progress in virtue: as he the more sternly detests and vanquishes his vices. And although thou oft be tempted and fall: nevertheless thou shouldst endeavour to rise again, and take up thy good resolve with greater watchfulness: and with the prophet say, “I have sworn and determined, to keep the judgements of Thy justice.” As often therefore as thou fallest short of thy conceived purpose, and hast no strength to march forward; by no means lose heart, or be downcast: but trusting in the Lord, with all humility and great insistence cry and pray, “Help me and I shall be saved: and I will meditate always on Thy justifications.”

XXI

PASSION SUNDAY. OF LAMENTING OVER OUR LORD'S PASSION

O ALL ye that pass by the way: attend and see if there be any sorrow like to My sorrow. Now the memory of Our Lord's Passion is celebrated in holy Church: and it is befitting that the children of the Church compassionate their Lord: Who for them deigned to die in the body: that they might live in both body and soul for all eternity. Let them then not be ungrateful, or regard themselves as strangers; but lovingly remember that they themselves are the Church and Spouse of Christ, who are called her children: if however they have cleaved to Christ with filial love and the single devotion of faith. O how great a charity of the sovereign Father; how great a love of the only-begotten Son of God: how great a benignity of the Holy Ghost hath overflowed on the whole human race. What shalt thou say to this, my soul? Wilt thou be ungrateful; or canst thou be unmindful of so great a love? How canst thou neglect Him; by Whom thou wast so diligently sought out? How couldst thou not love Him in turn; Who has so ardently loved thee? Love Him Who loves thee and loves thee so strongly; that He chose to endure death: rather than thou shouldst be lost. This is the love greater than which no man has had: and so He fully satisfied for all.

But what shalt thou do; and what shalt thou render to the Lord for His death? It behoves thee to do something: although thou canst not repay Him a worthy recompense. For every creature and all the saints suffice not to thank God worthily for His death: which He willingly underwent for thee. Recall to mind then His holy Passion, and according to thy measure strive to imitate it; for this is to render Him great thanks: cheerfully to desire to suffer tribulations for Him. Draw then thy mind away from outward things:

and turn thy whole thought to the image of thy crucified Lord. For by this thou wilt be able the easier to shut out other images from thy mind: and also, by the impression of this holy image, the more patiently to endure all bodily pains. And since now according to the season it beseems the Church to think of the Lord's Passion: therefore to it thou shouldst more intently direct thy exercises. If the preceding days of fast have passed heedlessly: at least now, in this fortnight, let fresh devotion inflame thee, because of the Passion of Christ. And if thou rememberest that thou hast done anything well: add still better to what is passed. Be now more earnest and fervent; for so the memory of Our Lord's Passion demands: and the compassion taken up by the whole Church for the death of her Saviour. Let it not be burdensome or wearisome to think over the bitter Passion of Christ: which He was ready to endure for thee. Each of these days gather and carry away a bunch of myrrh from the vine of the Lord of Sabaoth, which place between thy breasts for the custody of thy heart: for thence breathes the odour of life: and if thou chew it well, thou shalt receive wondrous strength amidst trials and reproaches. Indeed it has been proved by many and experienced, that, exercising themselves oft in the Passion of the Saviour, His holy stripes and blessed wounds have savoured so sweetly to them, that they have overflowed with tears from vehement sorrow: and by an exceeding great affection of love and compassion, they have been strongly inflamed to endure even insults and sufferings for the love of Christ. What shall I say, that some led beyond themselves, and wholly changed from self-love, longed to enter the interior of Jesus, to experience His utter emptying-out, even to the death of the Cross; heartily desiring to be humbled and despised by all creatures: that Christ alone might be glorified in their hearts, and they themselves only contemned. So burning is it, the blood of Christ poured out through love; that it mightily inflames him that deeply meditates thereon, and makes him so forgetful of self, as to deem contempt joy: and to regard as nothing the things that are painful to the body. For thus the ardent lover commences to be made like his dear beloved through sufferings: while he wholly and freely abandons himself to Him: Who for his redemption spared Himself in nought. Hence springs a very strong love, most grateful comfort is received, a singular devotion grows; carnal affection dies, the spirit is raised in God: the understanding is enlightened: and the word of the prophet is realized, saying: "And my chalice which

inebriateth me, how goodly is it.” But because this is very great and difficult, nor attainable to any man of himself: therefore, my soul, beg, seek, and knock; that the most kind Jesus, full of the Holy Ghost and power, rich unto all that call upon Him, may mercifully open unto thee this excellent treasure, which He hath hidden in Himself: and make the most precious unction of devotion flow from His sacred wounds to thee; so that thou also mayest learn to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the hardest stone: which is concealed from the proud, but shown to humble and devout hearts; veiled from the carnal and them that savour earthly things: but oft granted to be tasted by the pure and simple. This is the wondrous disposition of God; that the meek and humble take: what the elated and curious cannot take. Thou seest how many read much, examine the sublime, and seek the subtle; but have little or almost no devotion to the Passion of Christ; because they pour themselves out on exterior things, and seek to be comforted in things of earth; therefore is their heart within made dry and tasteless: and they cannot experience the things that are Jesus Christ’s. They are engaged in many things: and edified in few. They overlook the profitable, omit the necessary: love the subtle, despise the simple; are carried away to divers matters, and examine everything that is new: and not even thus find rest, or are satiated with what they hear; for as long as they seek not Jesus by His Passion and Cross: they will assuredly not attain true interior sweetness and the knowledge of His Godhead. For Jesus alone opens the way to His Divinity, by His most sacred humanity. Which blessed Paul knew well when he said: that in Him are hid all the treasures of the wisdom and knowledge of God. And therefore, leaving aside words of earthly wisdom: he exercised himself in the life and Passion of Christ. “For I judged not myself to know anything among you: but Jesus and Him crucified.”

Take heed to this, my soul; and, leaving aside curious things and all vanities: direct the interior eye of the heart to Jesus crucified. For the present watch diligently, and with Jesus on Mount Olivet pray to the Father; that as He was given the chalice of His blessed Passion to drink: so to thee also be granted an ardent affection to compassionate Him lovingly. For thou shalt find more in the wounds of Jesus Christ: than in the possession of the whole world. And the Passion of Christ alone will bring thee greater wonder of mind: than the contemplation of all created things. This I say

then, that thou mayest have greater fervour towards the Passion of Christ; meditate thereon more intently: yea, pass not a single hour or day without the memory thereof. For whatever thou dost read or hear in other words or deeds of the saints, this thou shalt find much more fully and deliciously in the life and Passion of Christ. Indeed the venerable Passion of Christ surpasses the sufferings of all the saints in many ways: since all the sufferings of all the saints are sanctified by the Passion of Christ alone: and are made acceptable to God and meritorious by His death. For He is the Saint of Saints, Who has power to forgive men their sins; Who renders all their works pleasing: and delivered Himself as a holy sacrifice to God, unto the remission of all sins.

But three ways in particular the Passion of Christ far surpasses the sufferings of His elect, namely in dignity, and bitterness: and fruit or profit. In dignity excels the person of the sufferer: since He was the Son of God. In bitterness is considered the dreadful rending of His body: for it was of a most exquisite and tender complexion. And in the fruit is seen the redemption of the human race; since by His death, which He underwent without guilt, He freed us from eternal death: and merited for us the entry to heavenly blessedness and glory. And so by the prophet He thus invites all the faithful to consider the greatness of His suffering, saying, “O all ye that pass by the way: attend and see if there be any sorrow like to My sorrow.”

Alas, alas, O Lord, how many pass before Thee heedlessly; with dry eyes and unmoved heart they pass by Thy image: barely do they look on the cross from afar; without reverence or genuflexion they hurry through the churches: they haste rather to go out than to come in; it gives them more pleasure to chatter than to pray: the world draws more agreeably to the market-place, than the divine and heavenly chanting to the choir; scarcely can they bide a short while in Thy praise: although Thou didst hang upon the cross, filled with many sorrows and reproaches, a long space of hours for their salvation. Where are our eyes, O Lord; and whither have we sent away our ears, that we give no heed to Thee? Convert us to Thee: for very soon are we turned away from Thee. Speedily we forget Thy great love: which Thou hast shown us in Thy blessed Passion. Thou hast suffered so much, things so grievous and shameful, and without any guilt, for men, from men, whom Thou Thyself didst create; from Thy own race and people, on whom of old and in the present time Thou hast bestowed so many

benefits: and still we remain hard and ungrateful. The insensible elements indeed were in commotion at Thy death: and the hearts of the children of men are unmoved. Alas for me, wretched and unhappy, for the sterility and insensibility of my heart; that I am so soon moved by a slight injury: and am nowise touched by such insults of my Lord Jesus Christ. I feel a small hurt of my body: and I ponder not the most terrible pains of my Lord. How little a love is made manifest: since the Head is grievously wounded, and the heart feels no grief thereat. If we are members one of another; why have I no compassion, and why is not my heart broken with sorrow? O my Lord, what shall I say to this; and what shall I do, wretch that I am? Why am I sometimes more speedily moved for a mortal man; than for Thee, my Creator and immortal Spouse? Why does the curiosity of vain things excite me more; than Thy hanging for me on the cross? For this I deeply grieve, that these things pass not more to my heart: nor wholly wound me, as they justly should. For shame, that I am so easily ready to laughter; so sensible to my own loss: and so slow and dry to weep the most bitter Passion of my Lord. And if sometimes I put on compunction: too speedily again I drop it: therefore I do not progress, and do not perfectly attain interior savour. Ah my God, that I should hear such good things of Thee, and do nothing worthy: I read that Thou didst endure such heavy torments: and still I find myself rather hard than softened. This is not a sign of perfect love: nor a token of loving compassion. How long shall I be insensible; and without sympathy with the Sufferer?

O now, most beloved and faithful Jesus, pallid and hanging on the cross: only hope of the desolate soul; grant me at this sacred season, worthily to celebrate the memory of Thy holy Passion: and by loving compassion to pass into Thy open wounds; where forgetful of myself, and mindful only of Thy sorrow, I may no longer faint in any tribulation: but freely resign myself to Thy will. How can I know or think that I love Thee; except by the suffering of afflictions for Thy name? For willingly to suffer from love, and to be able to bear every burden without complaint: is the sweetest recompense that a man can offer Thee. For herein are known THE TRUE LOVERS of the cross: namely in the WILLING endurance of every grief. And although Thou art now impassible, and open to no suffering, but crowned with glory and honour, and raised above all the heavens: to me however it is profitable and a great help, to be mindful in my sufferings of

Thy blessed Passion: to look on Thee, as if still passible in the flesh: namely, taken prisoner and bound, stripped of Thy garments, derided, spat upon, struck, whipped with scourges, crowned with thorns, nailed to the cross; given to drink of vinegar and gall, pierced with the lance, condemned with robbers, insulted, blasphemed, despised, abandoned, reprobate of all: and finally dead upon the cross, and tearfully buried. I must not pass over even one point: but from the grove of the gospel I will faithfully gather all Thy words and actions; and not only will I consider Thy wonderful works, but much more fondly will I embrace in meditation Thy sufferings and reproaches: for these are more needful to me unto salvation. Thy signs, glorious Jesus, instruct me in the faith and veneration of Thy holy name: but Thy reproaches and hard blows, received for me, incite and inflame me more to loving endurance, to humility and perfect charity. But he, who reverences only Thy signs, and considers solely Thy greatness, must be very careful: lest he be scandalized by the contemplation of Thy shameful death. Thou art to be admired indeed in the works wrought by divine power, and for these to be praised above all; but nevertheless Thou hast not disdained patiently to bear insults and curses: and so much the more Thou shouldst be loved.

Note this therefore, faithful soul: **AND BE GRATEFUL TO GOD FOR ALL THESE THINGS.** The poor and **HUMBLE JESUS** ought to comfort thee in every strait and tribulation: Who in His greatest need was forsaken of **GOD** and men. Thou art not greater than thy Master, slothful and unprofitable servant: nor more innocent than Christ, O Christian. If He bore so much for thee; what shalt thou do for thyself, and what shalt thou worthily render Him? If also He was thus forsaken and given over to contempt, Who was the dearly beloved Son: why art thou saddened, if sometimes thou art abandoned and despised, who art so unworthy a servant? Look upon thy heavenly pattern, thy constant memorial. O beautiful and most dear Jesus, Son of God; which shall I the more admire in Thee, the sublime or the lowly? And which shall I remark rather; the worthy or the unworthy? But better and with greater truth both together. I see Thee beauteous and noble in the divine nature: but disfigured and despised in the form of man. The former Thou remainest for ever: the latter Thou didst suffer for a time. Moreover to my spirit also within Thou art beautiful and lovable, pure and inviolable: because a stranger to all sin:

although outwardly Thou appearest defaced and wounded. Because of my sins Thou wast begrimed, and stricken, and crucified. Perchance the bodily eyes of the foolish and the proud are scandalized: not however of the loving and pious; but rather they compassionate and weep: who love Thee in truth. With such I desire to live: who, loving Thee with their whole heart, follow even to the shame of the cross. Thou art not a stumbling-block to me: but the greatest honour and joy. For Thy disfigurement is my comeliness; Thy stripes and every wound, the healing of my soul: and Thy death, my life. In these I live and in such the life of my spirit; Thou shalt reprove me, if I be not mindful of Thee: if I set not **THY PASSION AS THE COMMENCEMENT OF MY JOY**. For I know that Thou art the Holy One of God, Who hast willed to suffer these things: and I believe that for my sins Thou hast cheerfully borne them.

Weeping therefore, I will weep day and night; and my tears shall be on my cheeks: for the sorrow and bitter Passion of my Lord. David lamented with great lamentation over Saul and his son Jonathan; and shall I not lament the death of my Lord, my King? Jacob, seeing the coat of Joseph his son, rent his garment with weeping: and can I cease weeping, contemplating the dolorous death of my Lord? Joseph also seeing Benjamin, his brother by the same mother, standing before him: immediately his heart was moved, and he made haste and wept, and could not refrain himself from tears; and shall I, hearing of the cruel death of my Lord, be without tears? Let no man urge me to this; let no man forbid me grief and mourning: otherwise he will but torment me more. My Lord shed for me His precious blood; and shall I not shed for Him a little weeping? Would that I could so lament: as to be able to move all men also together with me. It is not given to all to weep: but it is a gift of the devout mind to mourn from inner compassion for her Lord; not for the sake of her own satisfaction: but to merit His greater favour.

O most dearly beloved Jesus, brightness of eternal glory; how dost Thou thus set, Sun of Justice? may my soul compassionate Thee; and from great affection of pity may the hardness of my heart be broken: and may it be intimately occupied to-day with the memory of Thy Passion. In the spirit of humility and in a contrite soul, may it faithfully stand before thee: and in every place of Thy Passion go with Thee, and sorrowfully give heed to all that Thou dost suffer; ardently long also to suffer and to die with Thee:

considering what David said of his son Absalom, “Who would grant me,” he said, “to die for thee my son Absalom, Absalom my son?” Loving affection at the death of his son, in arms against him, was strong in David: so that he vehemently lamented his death, and desired to die for him, who attempted to take his life: how much stronger should the grief of deep compassion be in me: over Thy guiltless death, consummated for me upon the cross. It ought to touch me more that Thou wast crucified and didst die for me: than if the whole world had been given me and spent for me. MAY MY SOUL THEREFORE DIE A BLESSED DEATH: and may my last end be like that of my Lord. Grant, O Lord, a happy hour of death: and to find blissful repose in Thee. It will be better for me to die now with Thee: than to live one hour longer without Thee. If this be denied: I will do what devout affection is wont to do. I will seek privacy: and chiefly for this end that I may lament the more freely. I will be mindful, O Lord, of Thy death: and with the inner lips of the heart I will kiss again and again the scars of all Thy wounds. Let no man speak to me this day: let no man trouble me with any solace, nor suggest any relaxation; for I will not receive comfort from any creature: lest I be hindered from mourning the most bitter Passion of my Lord. Depart, depart, friends and strangers; leave me to sit desolate and alone: that I may lament a while my Beloved, crucified for me. Let tears in my head fail for sorrow: and let there be none to wipe them, or to console me, save Him, Whom I mourn. Weep with me, sun and moon, and lament with me, all ye creatures: for our Lord is slain this day. And it is befitting that all things should be plunged in grief, while the Author of nature suffers: and that all should put on sadness: while the Son of God endures such anguish. I can speak no more, but I find relief only in weeping: for my God, crying out with a loud voice, gives up the ghost. Go forth, go forth, most abundant tears: and gush out even to exhaustion. Fall upon the slain body of my beloved Lord: and merit for me the inner sight of the heart: that I may sometime deserve to see Him in joy: Whom now with loving lament I mourn crucified. Let His tomb be to me a place of peace and repose: so that His glorious resurrection may be the end of all sorrow and sadness. Amen.

XXII

OF THE CROSS OF JESUS, WHICH HE BORE FOR US

AND they took Jesus and led Him forth: and bearing His own cross. He went forth into that place which is called Calvary. It is well to ponder this sorrowful journey of our Lord: and with the pious eye of the mind to look upon this so tearful a sight. Behold the innocent Jesus, weighed down beneath the burden of the cross, is led forth between two thieves: and, alas, is dragged with shouting to the public gallows. He embraces the wood of shame with the arms of His love; He sets to it His back torn with scourges, and His holy shoulder: and all the enfeebled members of His body. He bears the unmerited load, He takes up the unaccustomed yoke: He carries it to the place appointed Him: that He may gain the fruit of our salvation, to cure the poison of eternal death.

A great laughing-stock to the wicked: but a sacred mystery to all the faithful. To the evil a witness of perdition: because they crucify the Innocent; but to the good a symbol of salvation: because they compassionate Him and mourn. Their laughter shall be turned to weeping: but the groaning of these shall be changed into joy. The meek Lord proceeds on the way of shame with wondrous gentleness; willingly He passes out through the gate of Jerusalem, over which He wept on the day of palms: He bears with patience the derision of His hanging, inflicted on Him by His own nation. He protests not of the injuries done Him: He resists not, goaded on violently from behind. He summons not the angels to His aid: nor begs the assistance of His friends; but He goes on without delay, readily He obeys the evil-minded. Alone He bears His most heavy burden: alone He suffers the reproach of shame; but He does not desire alone the joy of

honour: because He wishes to bestow on all that believe in Him the merit of His Passion. He is not withdrawn from the way of the cross by affection for His Mother, nor hindered by the tears of His friends: He is not disturbed by the clamours of them that accompany Him, nor moved by the shouts of them that hate Him: He is not retarded by weariness of body from the task He has begun: nor overwhelmed by the storms of scandals. Alone and that most constantly He perseveres: free and with peaceful heart He stretches forward to the agony of His punishment: as esteeming little the glory of the world, so also bearing its shame with equanimity: persisting ever in the praise of the eternal Father: shutting out no man from His love: but with eager desire longing to fulfil the precept of the Father, ordained from eternity: and to consummate the work of man's reparation laid upon Him by His Passion and cross.

In this noble example He now shows: what before He wholesomely taught in word: "Who wishes to come after Me," He said, "let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me." Lo, thou hast thy guide on the rough way, Jesus the Son of God: the captain and teacher to the nations to deliver them. Follow then, faithful servant, thy Lord: disciple, follow thy Master; imitate, frail member, thy glorious Head: that by His guidance thou mayest attain the kingdom of eternal bliss. If thou desirest prosperity and peace: fear not adversity. Follow, sinner, the Just; man, thy God, creature, thy Creator: exile, thy Redeemer. Cast away earthly fear, put on strength: strive as a good soldier, overcoming nature. The cross is the way to salvation: suffering is the road to the crown. Be not ashamed of the shame of Christ: if thou wilt contemplate the glorious countenance of Christ. For thee He bears this cross: for thee He undergoes also the death of the cross. He gives thee an example of endurance: He smoothes by His feet the way of roughness: He shows that the shame of the cross is not to be shunned, but embraced. The humble Jesus bears His cross for the wicked, that He may sanctify the wicked: He suffers torments for vile slaves: that He may make them co-heirs of His kingdom. Who would not now desire to bear the reproaches and contempt of men: when the innocent Christ endured from men things so grievous and shameful, without fault? For the soldier bears more easily: what he sees his king bear. And so the noble King, the King of kings, and Lord of all, goes up to fight against the prince of the world: not protected by a shield, nor armed with steel; but by the cross defended and

entrenched, to be fastened to the cross: on the cross finally to die for His friends. Coming therefore to the place of Calvary, with the standard of the cross, He chose there to set up the title of His name, and to work the mystery of our salvation; foreknowing that the spot given up to shame was to be made glorious by wondrous signs: and the gallows of His cross to be changed into honour: in short time also to be preached throughout the world: and to be worshipped by the kings and princes of the earth. The venerable symbol of the cross is indeed a glorious ensign in the Christian host; and a singular protection above all manner of weapons: and an impregnable shield against the ferocity and terror of the devil. There then Jesus, the standard-bearer of the cross, prince and patron of all cross-bearers, stood in the place of awful shame: which, because of the bodies of the slain, was exceedingly despised and unclean. There He is speedily stripped of His garments; and naked He ascended the naked cross: and prayed for them that crucified Him. There the Almighty, as though He had no power, allowed Himself to be stretched out into the form of a cross: to be fastened by nails, to be pierced by a lance: and to be derided by wicked men. There deprived of all human comfort: He left an example of perfect self-denial, and a pattern of utter poverty. There by the touch of His sacred flesh, He consecrated the wood of life: and by the shedding of His precious blood dedicated the altar of the cross. There He fulfilled all the sacrifices of the Old Testament, figurative of His Passion: and offered Himself a victim to the Father in the odour of sweetness, for the salvation of the world. There He ended His life by a happy agony through obedience on the cross: dying, He conquered death, opened the gate of Paradise: and led the late repenting thief with Him to the promised joys.

Since therefore Jesus carried His cross on His own shoulders, Who was without sin; bear thou also thy cross, for thou hast grievously and often sinned: and justly deserved eternal punishment. To weak minds the way of the cross seems bitter and burdensome: but its end is joyous and fruitful, and sweet and wholesome to them that love. Is it not better now to lead a sad and laborious life for Christ and to suffer with the Crucified; than after the brief pleasure of a corruptible life, to be tormented for ever with the devil in hell? For so much the more agreeable to God shalt thou be, and worthy of fuller glory in the heavenly kingdom; the more grievous pains and labours thou now bearest for the name of Jesus, not looking to temporal

consolations: but to the Passion of Christ, and the hard life of the saints, who passed through many tribulations. Speedily, all temporal pain and injury inflicted, pass like a shadow; but the glory of everlasting recompense remains in Heaven: which in the end will be given as reward to thee for thy good patience, at the word of Christ. Strive therefore to keep the way of the holy cross; and to carry the sorrowful image of the crucified Jesus in thy heart: and manfully to imitate Him in thy frail body according to thy strength. Freely resign thyself, and trustfully commend all thy affairs to the will of God; Who did and endured for thy salvation so much, that thou wilt never be able to return Him worthy thanks for the least point of His Passion: even if thou couldst suffer all the trials and toils of all the holy martyrs. But, alas, that thou dost follow the Lord's cross so lukewarmly: that thou dost not compassionate the sorrows of Christ more intensely: that thou dost not serve Him more fervently, and render thanks unceasingly; Who deemed thee so dear, and so loved thee above other creatures, as not to refuse to die for thee: but by His innocent death, delivered thee from death eternal. For thou wouldst have been condemned for ever: if Christ had not been crucified and had not died for thee. For who could have satisfied for all the sins of men; save Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Lamb without stain?

XXIII

OF THE MERIT OF OUR LORD'S PASSION, AND THE DIGNITY OF THE HOLY CROSS

BUT us it behoves to glory in the cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ: in Whom is our salvation, life, and resurrection. These words concerning the sacred cross are read and chanted in holy Church; and therein is praised the merit of Our Lord's Passion, which is most deservedly placed before all the sacrifices of the Law, and all the toils and virtues of the saints. For in the Passion and cross of Christ is our true salvation, and the redemption of the whole human race is most fully found: whereby Christ redeemed us and satisfied unto God the Father for our sins: and conquering death, unlocked Paradise again for us. This is exemplified in the thief hanging on the cross: to whom it was said: "This day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise." O wondrous clemency of God: O most sweet answer: O saving blessing of the cross: which absolved the thief from all guilt: and brought him into Paradise, the first among Christians. Let therefore all the faithful render thanks to Christ, signed with the sign of the holy cross; washed and cleansed in the blood of Christ, redeemed by the Passion of Christ; quickened by the death of Christ, healed by the wounds of Christ: soothed by the pains of Christ, honoured by the shame of Christ. Let them one and all say with devout heart and harmonious mouth to the honour of the Crucified, to the confusion of the devil, to the exaltation of the holy cross: to the attaining of hope of eternal salvation, to the having of a strong trust in the hour of death; let them say, read, chant, recite, ponder, and ruminate the words most sweet, and truly most holy: and most agreeable to God above

all perfumes. "But us it behoves to glory in the cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ."

Happy the soul whose HEART IS PIERCED BY THE MOST BITTER PASSION OF CHRIST: and who DAILY EXERCISES HERSELF THEREIN, meditating, reading, praying. Blessed the soul, which takes up her cross, renouncing all earthly things: and whatever trouble befalls her WITHIN OR WITHOUT: bears it ALL PATIENTLY for Christ and HOLDS HER PEACE. For this is TO GLORY IN THE CROSS, TO REJOICE IN TRIBULATION FOR CHRIST'S SAKE; TO ABSTAIN FROM DELIGHTS OF THE FLESH, TO FLEE HONOURS, TO FORSAKE ONE'S OWN WILL: AND HUMBLY TO OBEY EVEN UNTO DEATH. To do this is to imitate Christ by the cross: and truly TO LOVE Him. For herein Christ knows who belongs to Him, and who loves Him more: if a man strives to conform himself to His Passion not only in thought, but in daily mortification.

And for this who is fit? Thinkest thou, any man will be found ready to take up his cross? A great and deep mystery is the word of the cross, which all do not receive: yea very many dread and flee the cross: and yet it leads to life eternal. O truly blessed cross, what great sweetness thou hast within: and what great strength thou affordest against all malady of vice and grief of heart. O precious wood of life, comely, saving: and blessed above all the trees of Paradise; to be honoured by angels, worshipped by men: to be kissed with devout lips, and embraced with outstretched arms. Because of thee we have been delivered, and reconciled to God: who were by nature children of wrath, and lost slaves. Because of thee joy came into the world: sadness and lamenting into hell. Thou art the salvation of believers, the glory of apostles, the shield of martyrs; the praise of confessors, the crown of virgins, the solace of widows, the strength of the aged, the discipline of youth: the mirror of religious, the refuge of the distressed.

O cross, brighter than the stars, more beautiful than the moon, more resplendent than the sun; lighting up Heaven, penetrating hell, chasing the demons, defending men, terrifying the wicked, rejoicing the good: humbling the proud, raising the lowly. O glorious cross, wondrous sign: invincible standard, impregnable buckler. O sweet wood, worthy of all honour; thou didst bear the King of the heavens: and didst support in thine arms the dying Son of God. Because of thee all images of the cross of

whatsoever material made, and in whatsoever place set: are held in honour and veneration. Before thee bow down kings and princes, lord and lady, slave and handmaiden, rich and poor, monk and cleric, master and pupil; every age, and each sex of the faithful worship thee, praise and bless: for Christ's sake, Who hung on thee, and redeemed all.

O cross blessed, for with thee are the sacraments of the Church blessed; priests consecrated, the sick anointed, the dead defended; images sculptured, walls painted: altars decorated.

O most lovely cross, dedicated in the body of Christ, and adorned with His members as with jewels; reddened with rose-red blood, pierced by nails, fixed in the depths of the earth: thou stretchest thy points to the four quarters of the world, drawing all things to thee, and embracing all things that are in Heaven and upon earth.

O most noble cross, most strong above all kinds of armour; conquering the world and the devil, fearing no punishment of death: in every anguish and need, both in life and in death, thou art a most secure aid, and singular solace.

O most beloved cross, chosen by Christ: and on His shoulders borne to the place of Calvary, nor parted from Him until death: near which stood Mary, the Mother of Jesus, full of sorrow, with the beloved disciple John and the devout Magdalene: I beseech thee, help me and defend me ever here and everywhere, day and night; that the malignant enemy, the ensnarer of souls, prevail not against me: but by the sacred sign of thy power protect and strengthen me; that I may continue in a right faith, firm hope, and perfect charity: for His sake, Who died on thee for me.

O cross, most full of virtue, and most worthy of all honour: lo, before thee tremble the wicked powers of hell; under thy sway also empires bow: to thee the things of heaven and earth bend the knee. For in thy power are wrought signs and wonders in many regions; lightning and thunder yield to thee: in wars also and darksome places, in perils of the sea and the air, thou art an excellent defence, and most secure refuge.

O cross, most holy, most highly to be revered, worthily to be worshipped, intimately to be loved, to be written on the heart, impressed on the brow and breast, devoutly I pray, earnestly I beseech, be nigh to me in all my distress: save, deliver, bless, sanctify all my members: rule my senses, all my words and works as long as I am in this life: THAT BY

THEE HE MAY ACCEPT ME, WHO BY THEE REDEEMED ME: Jesus Christ, my Lord, crucified for me.

O cross, saving tree, exalted above all trees; thou art higher than the cedar, more redolent than the cypress: lovelier than the palm, more precious than the balsam, richer than the olive, more fruitful than the vine, sweeter than the fig, more verdant than the box, redder than the rose; more wholesome than all herbs and simples: more efficacious than all medicines and salves. Thou healest bodies and souls: thou soothest pains, and comfortest tears: thou givest hope to the wretched: and promisest rewards to the just. Thou affordest pardon to the penitent: and bestowest grace and mercy on all them that flee to thee. Thou pourest abundant blessing on the devout: showest light to them that wander, givest compunction to hearts: and ceasest not to bring the oil of consolation to all the faithful throughout the world: and shalt not cease to bud the fruit of eternal life even to the end of time: by the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, crucified for the salvation of the world.

O cross most sweet, most broad of foliage, most fresh of flower, most fertile of fruit: thou boldest the primacy and dignity, above all images representing the sacred Passion of Christ: wherever the name of Christ be heard, or preached. Therefore, because of the veneration of the divine virtue concealed in thee: thou art rightly adored, worshipped, and honoured by all. Thou on churches and chapels, on cloisters and castles, on cities and towns, on gates and doors, on walls and windows, on towers and roofs, on pavements and tombs, on altars and panels, on chasubles and stoles, on copes and coverings, on bridles and banners, on books and documents, on tables and stools, on halls and cells, on divers buildings and paintings: thou dost impress and inscribe the symbol of thy power. Thou art also fittingly set with gold and silver, jewels and precious stones; thou art reverently embroidered and adorned with purple and fine linen, satin and silk, flowers and roses: because of the noble image of our Saviour, triumphant and hanging on thee. All these devout honours are rightly paid thee by the faithful: because thou didst endure great shame and derision from the perfidious Jews in the Passion of Christ. It is just therefore, O good and holy Cross, that thou shouldst be associated in honour and exaltation: who didst share the shame and grief. No mortal man, however, shall ever be able to offer thy worth sufficient praise and honour; even if he were resplendent

with the virtues of all the angels: or were glorious with the miracles of the saints. All praise and honour is too little and falls far short in words of what thy worth demands: for from the benefits of Christ abundantly bestowed on us, and from thy constant cleaving to Christ in the hour of death, still fuller homage of praise is justly due to thee. In this especially is fidelity of friendship known: when a man stands by his friend in his last need, and compassionates, and ministers, and continues his close comrade even to the yielding up of the ghost. Thus certainly didst thou act, O most faithful Cross, with the Saviour, Our Lord Jesus Christ: Who first patiently bore thee on His shoulders: and thou in turn didst worthily receive thy Creator in thine arms. But also thou didst not forsake Him, thy lover, even to the end: by Whom thou was gently embraced, and long carried. Whence likewise thou hast become to all true Christians and Cross bearers a mirror of endurance in the chastisement of the flesh: yea also, lovers of the cross praise thee as the victor of every toil, and the giver of eternal rewards; as is most clearly shown in blessed Peter the Apostle, and St. Andrew: who both went to Christ by means of the cross.

O cross, most happy, and to be loved above all devout comforts: ever to be held in mind, ever to be kept in sight: thou art the couch of the Saint of saints: Who, when He had not where to lay His aching and ailing head: thou didst become His pillow. Thou art the bed of the wounded back of Our Saviour, not soft or flower-strewn: but unyielding, rough, and narrow exceedingly. Thou hast suffered none to tarry, or rest, or repose within thine arms: but the sacred, divine body of Jesus, virgin-born: by which in divers places thou didst deserve to be touched, sprinkled and consecrated with His precious blood. Thou art the stool of the holy feet of the Son of God in His agony: thou the altar of the High Priest: on which Christ offered Himself for our sins, a victim to God unto the odour of sweetness. Thou art the ark of the covenant of the Lord, containing the Author of both Testaments: thou, the golden vase holding the hidden manna, the true body of Christ, sacrificed for us. Thou art the treasury of the most high King, full of heavenly riches; in which are contained the holiest relics of all the world: namely, the Lord's body, the bloody nails, the thorny crown, and all the precious wounds.

O truly holy cross: how grandly hast thou merited to be beautified, enriched, and honoured by God. For thou art adorned with such great, good,

and holy relics: that no shrine, no casket, no royal palace, no house of ivory, no marble pillar is to be compared with thy worth. Duly then and justly let the whole earth with all devotion worship thee and sing to thee: let it utter a psalm to thy name for ever and ever to the honour of the Crucified. Let every faithful soul therefore read and often meditate the words written of the sacred cross: and say, with blessed Paul, the Apostle, and all the holy Church, “But us it behoves to glory in the cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ: in Whom is our salvation, life and resurrection.” Amen.

XXIV

OF THE MANIFOLD FRUIT FROM REMEMBRANCE OF THE LORD'S PASSION, AND OF THANKFULNESS THEREFORE

THINK diligently upon the Lord Jesus Christ, that endured such opposition from sinners against Himself: that you be not wearied, fainting in your minds. The Passion of Christ, brought back to memory, bestows many benefits on a man: and the more often and earnestly it is pondered: the more sweetly it savours, and the more deeply it moves. FOR IT IS AN INCENTIVE TO DIVINE LOVE: it is the teaching of patience: it is comfort in tribulation. It is the foe of dissipation: it is the subject of holy compunction: it is the exercise of interior devotion. It is the banishing of despair: it is the most certain hope of the pardon of sins: it is the profitable redemption of past evil days. It is a source of surpassing confidence in the hour of death, that a man despair not of himself: it is the appeasing of the severity of God in the judgement to come. It is the soothing of anxious trouble: it is the endurance of harsh reproach. It is the expulsion of evil thought: it is the restraint of temptation of the flesh. It is instruction in humble submission: it is ease in bodily sickness. It is the belying of worldly honour: it is the reproach of temporal abundance. It is the counsel of voluntary poverty: it is the renunciation of self-will: it is the cutting-off of superfluous want. It is the arousing of lukewarm life: it is the inflaming of fervent amendment. It is the gaining of fuller grace: it is the bringing of heavenly consolation: it is the proof of fraternal compassion. It is the preparation of divine contemplation: it is the increase of future blessedness.

It is the easing of present pain: it is the purging of future fire: it is great satisfaction for daily sins. With these and very many other goods abounds and flourishes the Passion of Christ devoutly pondered; often read, carefully digested. This is very well known and savoured of the soul given to God, a stranger to the world, a friend of solitude: a warden of her own mouth, humble of heart, and at rest from cares. This holy remembrance is highly pleasing to God: it rejoices the angels, edifies men: purifies the conscience, drives away weariness, soothes pains, sweetens bitternesses: represses anger, curbs concupiscence. Truly the Passion of Christ is the hidden treasure of God, the fullness of every virtue, the perfection of the religious state; the summary of all holiness.

But, alas, how great is the ingratitude of man, how great the sloth of the human heart: how great its carelessness in remembering the benefits of God: which are such, so boundless and precious: that they cannot be computed, nor fully unfolded by any man. Return then to thy heart, O servant of Christ: and leaving aside vain and perishable things, recall the benefits of God, and chiefly meditate often and earnestly on the Passion of Christ: so that thereby THOU MAYEST BE MORE FERVENTLY INFLAMED UNTO HIS LOVE. Then thou shalt be acceptable to God, and in thy own heart very joyous and peaceful; if thou art mindful of the benefits of God, and devoutly render thanks to Him; from Whom thou hast received every good. THEN DOST THOU PROFITABLY SPEND THY TIME, WHEN THOU GRIEVEST FOR THY EVIL DEEDS: AND GIVEST THANKS FOR THE FAVOURS OF GOD. But for this thou shouldst grieve much, that never hast thou offered worthy thanks to God for His so immense blessings; nor yet art able to thank Him sufficiently: even if thou shouldst attend to nothing else. Thou shouldst, however, strive to raise thy heart to God: and, as much as thou canst, ponder God's gifts with great attention. O how much He loved thee, Who hast shown such wonders in the beauty of creation: that thou mightest have ready matter in the sensible creatures of the world of constant thankfulness to God, Who created thee and those good things. Wherefore strive TO SERVE HIM WITH SOVEREIGN REVERENCE IN JOY OF HEART, as the holy angels in Heaven: as far as is possible in the frail body and in the state of the present life: which, compared with the blessedness to come, is rather to be called a prison of the soul. For God deigned to be made man, to suffer, be crucified,

and die for this purpose; that by His Passion, cross and death, He might show thee, how much He loved thee: for whom He toiled and endured so much. Be not then ungrateful, nor unmindful of all those things, which the Lord Jesus did on earth: but carefully consider the mighty works of God, liberally wrought in favour of the whole human race. Who yet has promised much greater goods, and most certainly will bestow them in Heaven on thee: if only thou art grateful for present gifts, and remainest faithful in little even until death.

A great vice is ingratitude, and exceedingly blamable before God and man. For he is unworthy of a divine favour: who does not give thanks to God with a devout heart. Nor does he deserve to receive more, who praises himself in anything; or works carelessly, were it only one talent granted to him. It is certainly a great thing: that God should deign to give man anything. **NOR SHOULD IT BE DEEMED LITTLE, WHICH THE LORD, SO GREAT AND HIGH ABOVE ALL, BESTOWS ON A MAN POOR AND A SINNER:** who has nothing worthy to render in return. Let God then be loved much; let His praise be ever in thy mouth: and let a small thing be taken for great. Let all be rendered back to Him; let all be attributed to Him: Who certainly has given all, and has favoured one unworthy. Nor does God seek aught, save to be purely loved, and duly praised for all; so that by loving, praising, honouring, and returning thanks to Him above all: man may be for ever beatified in Him. Amen.

XXV

OF PROFITABLE EXERCISE IN THE PASSION OF CHRIST

I TO my beloved: and His turning is towards me. Between friends mutual discourse gives delight, and private counsel is held dear: such as also often takes place between the devout soul and Jesus crucified. She therefore says: “I to my Beloved am what I am: and beside Him I heed no other.” On Him alone I long to gaze: to Him wholly I commend myself; for He has care of me: and His turning doubtless is towards me. I will not then that my eyes be turned aside elsewhere; but that my whole heart be turned unto my Beloved: Who suffered and died for me: yea, through love was wholly torn and pierced with wounds. Formerly, I sought Him an infant wailing in the crib: but now I desire to behold Him hanging on the gibbet. For as then I turned me to worship the new-born child: so now also I turn me to Him to mourn Him, delivered to death for me. In all these my Beloved is to me, Who was given wholly to me: for me was truly born, for me truly afflicted and sacrificed. Once He shed tears of pity: but now He gives His precious blood. Lo, how He loved me: Who delivered Himself to death, to deliver me from death. Should I not justly turn myself to seek, hold and embrace this Beloved to the neglect of all else; Whose unspeakable love unceasingly looks to me? But His turning is towards me in a special manner: when He arouses me with the interior goads of love to renew the memory of His Passion, and demands that I thank Him, and be conformed to Him within: for in nothing did He toil so much for me. There He unveils to me the mystery of redemption: and more fully instructs me to savour of the things of God. For this wisdom, which comes from above, is beyond man: teaching and urging not to glory save in the cross of my Lord Jesus Christ:

in Whom is my whole salvation and redemption. By Whom also the world is crucified to me and I to the world; that I may delight to say to Him with confidence: 'I to my Beloved and His turning is towards me.' Much sweetness seems to me hidden in this word; and if I do not take all: still I do not give up hope of receiving some, if only a very little. Let but the Beloved be turned towards me, and say whatever He please: I know, that He will not speak in vain.

"Tell me, beloved Jesus, the word of Thy mystery: the word of Thy Passion and cross, which Thou hast openly borne in the flesh. For all do not take the word of the cross; which to some indeed seems a scandal, and to others is foolishness: but to me is the power and wisdom of God, the salvation also of the world and life eternal. If any man think otherwise, he is an infidel and foolish: and the judgement of God will go against him."

"My Passion," saith the beloved, "is as some precious aromatic herb of most excellent perfume and sweetest taste; which carefully pondered in the heart, as if well crushed in a mortar, diffuses a most powerful odour: healing every disease and sickness of vice. Herein truly thou shalt find the medicine of the soul; and full comfort of every grief. But it behoves that thou OFT exercise thyself THEREIN: and WITH ALL THY HEART STRIVE TO CONFORM THYSELF THERETO. For then thou shalt begin to live religiously, and shalt truly progress in virtue, and die in peace: if in life and death thou dost imitate Me by the Passion and cross. But, alack, I am an abject in My own house: and one cast aside. For I seem truly a stranger and shut out from the hearts of many, for whom My life has no savour; whom My Passion does not touch, or attract, or reach their heart as it should: but, they are entangled in things vain and superfluous. They anxiously consider their own daily misery and want; and study to avoid temporal evils: yet how much I suffered for them, they think but seldom or little. Wretched they are and pitiable, full of cares and complaints: who can suffer little for Me; but are eager to do much for their own will: yea even, for the fulfilment of their own desire, are sensible almost of no toil. Alas, such do not draw saving fruit from My Passion; but because of their excessive softness which they bear towards themselves: they risk great harm to their soul. For if they would be perfectly cured, and freed from passions: with all humility they should take refuge in the true remedies of the soul concealed in My Passion; and by the merit and power of My

Passion they would become more strong: and would learn to bear all adversities with patience. My Passion hath no taste, save for them that long and seriously meditate it: and fervently desire to imitate the same. It is the tree of life to them that grasp it: and who follows it well, he shall be blessed in his deed. For he shall gain in the present greater grace: and in the time to come fuller glory.”

“Collect therefore thy senses, and abide with thyself: shutting out all tumult. Then take up a little portion of My Passion, and diligently think it over according to the time and season. For this, brought back to memory each day: will more and more savour, strengthen and inflame him that meditates. For all spiritual progress and perfection will be found therein: but these good things are not tasted, save by them that love and desire to imitate it. To the carnal and worldly it seems bitter and hard: but to the pious and devout sweet and comforting. For who aim at honours, or at gaining earthly possessions, everywhere seeking their own interests; these are not in agreement with My Passion: nor can they attain its internal sweetness. But who seeks to despise the world, and to crucify his flesh with its vices and concupiscences: he discovers the greatest consolation: and he shall experience singular devotion in My Passion. For to such a soul I speak: ‘My dove in the clefts of the rock: in the hollow places of the wall.’ To her also I frequently address those words: which I said to a certain beloved disciple: ‘Bring thy hand hither, and see the place of My nails; and be not cowardly and fearful: but strong and great-souled in imitating My sufferings.’ He also shall have his singular refuge in the open wound of My right side: whosoever strives to deny himself: and to strip himself of all affection for creatures. He shall also become the more free to visit Me in the deep wound of love: the less now he troubles himself of any created comfort. For I draw all his interior to Myself: so that he feels not himself, who feels My wounded heart. Make thyself then a stranger to every earthly occupation: put aside empty anxieties, retire from friends and acquaintance; keep thyself pure and free from all things: that thou mayest enter to thy Beloved through the door of the wounded side. Steep thyself in affection such as the holy women had, who looked upon Me hanging on the cross: and most bitterly mourned Me as their only-begotten child. For then shalt thou truly be able to realize and taste how powerful My Passion is in the heart of the lover, if thou putttest on the bowels of My beloved mother: if

thou resolvest with thy whole heart that there is nothing to be loved as I: because from greatness of love, is drawn greatness of compassion.”

“Well and very well Thy words please me, Lord Jesus Christ. Whence I beg Thee, that although I be not able perfectly to imitate Thee in all things: Thou grant me at least a little to compassionate Thee. I will uplift therefore the eyes of my heart to my Lord hanging naked on the cross; I will attentively consider each wound and piercing of Thy body: and with special devotion I will embrace and kiss the wounded hands and the transpierced feet with their nails. Then also I will enter into the open wound of Thy side, as into the chamber of my Beloved sleeping; where I will live in secret, and shall be guarded from all harm: and will rest with happy repose. I will not fear whatever evils are inflicted upon me; nor whatever things can be said or felt in contempt of me, if only Thou art with me and abidest with me. I will put all trust in Thee: and in Thy side day and night will I tarry. Thou art a more faithful friend than all this world: Thou art a wall stronger for defence, than all the host of the angels. And therefore never should I be forgetful of Thee: but as much as my faculty and frailty permit: sorrowing I will be mindful of Thy most bitter Passion. Of which nevertheless no creature is fully and fitly able to think, speak or write enough, even if all should give their time to nothing else; for it is beyond all the comprehension of a creature, that Thou, God, the Creator of all, didst deign to become man and to die for men.”

“I therefore suppliantly pray Thee, Lord, mercifully to look upon me a sinner; and by Thy grace inwardly to enlighten, frequently to visit: to water with tears, to crush and cleanse with compunction; so that whom Thou hast redeemed by Thy precious blood: Thou mayest renew and enkindle by the earnest meditation of Thy Passion. Grant me devoutly to progress therein: and ever to gather thence wholesome remedies for all my passions. Would that it more and more deeply touched my heart than it has hitherto: and affected and instructed me in such manner, as it has often enkindled and touched many holy men and women; so that in my life also the likeness of Thy death might result by the working of the spirit and the mortification of the flesh: and that I might be able to say that memorable word of the Apostle, ‘With Christ I am nailed to the cross.’ And to proclaim also that most loving word against all the carnal and vain-speaking wiseacres of the world: ‘From henceforth let no man be troublesome to me: for I bear the

marks of the Lord Jesus in my body.’ The blessed Apostle Paul bore Thy glorious and precious scars in his body: when, besides the daily memory of Thy Passion, with all the affection of his heart, he rejoiced to be afflicted externally, and to be esteemed of no account for Thy name; and whatever he felt grievous in the body, or troublesome in the soul: all this he deemed light and easily bearable from the loving contemplation of Thy wounds. And therefore he exhorted all Thy faithful lovers saying: ‘Let us always bear about in our body the mortification of Jesus: that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our bodies.’ Strive thou also, my soul, now to do this same, especially these days, wherein the venerable memory of the Passion of the Lord is celebrated in the Church; and with mournful mind and devout attention direct thither the eye of contemplation: where thou knowest Jesus suffered for thee in more grievous pains. Say lovingly with the spouse, mindful ever of thy Spouse crucified from love: ‘I to my Beloved: and His turning is towards me.’ ”

XXVI

OF SEVEN NOTABLE POINTS OF MEDITATION ON THE PASSION OF CHRIST

ATTEND and see: if there be any sorrow like to My sorrow. Above all the benefits of God bestowed on the human race, the Passion of Christ stands supreme: and touches the heart most tenderly. Therefore ought the mind be watchful to, remember so great a benefit; and with great compassion of heart earnestly ponder on the bitterness of Christ's Passion: for this is grateful to God, and wholesome for him that meditates. For each several wound is a medicine of the soul; and the pitiless blows of the scourge are proofs of God's love: and the wiping out of our sins. O what great thanks am I bound to render Christ for every blow and cruel wound: which He endured in His body for me, a vile sinner.

Ponder, therefore, first, Who is He that suffers these things; secondly, from whom He suffers: thirdly, how much He suffers; fourthly, for whom He suffers: fifthly, how long He suffers; sixthly, in what places He suffers: seventhly, in what members He suffers. For it helps much to interior compassion: if these seven notable points are considered in order. For if thou heedest the person of the Sufferer; none is more worthy, none more noble: none more holy, none more excellent. Verily, He is the Son of God Who suffers: the only-begotten of God the Father, the First-born of the Virgin-Mother, conceived of the Holy Ghost, full of holiness and grace; renowned for signs and virtues: living in the world without sin. He is the true Lamb of God without stain, prefigured in the Law: foretold by the prophets, desired by many kings and just men; sent into the world by the

Father to suffer for the salvation of the world, ready of His own accord for the cross and death: sacrificed to God the Father on the altar of the cross for our sins. He therefore, being such and so great, a true priest and supreme Pontiff, holy, innocent, stainless, King of kings, Lord, Creator of all things, Maker of the angels, Saviour of men, refused not to be despised by men, made captive, bound, scourged, crucified, slain, buried: as the text of His sacred Passion clearly teaches.

O woful sight to every one that passes by the way of this life, manifested without: and given as example to all the faithful to be imitated within. Prithee, diligently weigh every single word and blow narrated in the Passion: since they were all wrought for thy salvation. For they commend to thee the very great charity of Christ: and they show thee that patience is to be exercised in every tribulation. It is most certainly evident that in comparison with the griefs and reproaches of Christ: the troubles, which thou dost suffer, are of no account. It is good for thee therefore to fix thy eye here often; and to seek solace in the sorrowful Passion of Christ: and as a dove to dwell in the clefts of the rock and mourn for the sufferings of Jesus. For Jesus will comfort thee more in the meditation of His blessed Passion: than all this world in all its honours and riches. In the Passion of Christ thou shalt find what will edify thee, and purify the conscience; but brief is the pleasure in worldly delights: and the conscience is left defiled. For everything that is not of God is vanity: and is to be esteemed as nothing. But the Passion of Christ is a living word and an efficacious lesson to instruct and inflame and purify: and more keen than any sword it reaches even to the interior of the heart. For it reproves negligence, softens hardness; pierces the heart of the lover with compassion: and very often moves to tears. For so often is the devout soul touched with compunction, and in a certain manner wounded within; as often as the Passion of Christ is read, or preached: or when a cross is gazed upon, or Jesus Christ and He crucified is named. And this for the soul is a great consolation, if thinking of the Passion of Christ she feels His pain in the spirit: which Christ endured and felt in manifold ways in the body.

Now therefore take heed and gaze upon Christ, as it were present: Who suffers these things for thee. First, think on the dignity of the person: and grieve vehemently that God in the flesh is so contumeliously handled. Behold the highest above all is put down lower than all; the noblest is

dishonoured, the loveliest is disfigured with spittle: the wisest is mocked, the mightiest is bound; the most innocent is scourged, the holiest is crowned with thorns: the most meek is buffeted, the richest is made poor; the most generous is despoiled, the most chaste is stripped naked: the most worthy is blasphemed, the most excellent is reproached; the most learned is held a fool, the most loving is hated: the most truthful is contradicted, the most sweet is given to drink of gall; the blessed is cursed, the peaceful is baited: the just is accused, the guiltless is condemned; the physician is wounded, the Son of God is crucified: the immortal is slain, the Master is hanged for the slave. O unheard-of crime: O awful and accursed wickedness of the Jews; which God, by His most loving mercy and sufferance, changed into so great a good: to wit, into the salvation of believers. For whence for a time the light of the world is quenched: thence light eternal is relit in the minds of the faithful. And whence for a brief season life is dead: thence everlasting death is slain in the elect. Finally, from the Passion of Christ the devil is overcome, and shamed; hell is despoiled, the thief converted, the world redeemed: the souls of the just are delivered from Limbo; the gates of Heaven are opened, the losses of the angels repaired: eternal salvation, wrought by Christ, is proclaimed to the whole world.

Consider, secondly, from whom Christ suffers these wrongs. Assuredly from His own people, from His own race dear to Him; from His kindred according to the flesh: from the Israelites, children of Abraham, whom of old He enriched with so many blessings; ennobled with so many privileges: instructed beyond the other nations with precepts and laws and ceremonies; from men whom He Himself founded, to whom He gave the best portion of the earth: for whose sake He came into the world and whom He desired to save. By these then, so gloriously favoured and exalted, Christ is wickedly spurned; enviously accused, ill-treated without cause, and finally condemned to a most disgraceful death. They were not mindful of the multitude of His mercies, which are from the ages: nor of His wondrous works, which He showed them, even after they had offended in many things. They heeded not how humbly He lived in their midst; how wholesomely He taught them: how He loved poverty and despised wealth; how He fled honours, and chose the lowly and simple: how many sick He healed, to how many blind He gave sight, how many demons He expelled, how many lepers He cleansed; and how resplendent with many other

glorious signs, by His works He proved Himself God: and, undergoing the needs of our body, showed Himself to be a true man. For these good things and wonderful virtues, wrought by the divine power, certainly He deserved, not insult, but glory; not punishment, but gratitude, not hatred, but love: He should have received from all, not mockery, but rather honour. But, alack, they were perverse and unbelieving, thankless for all favours: and for many good things they returned many evil; and also they incited numerous others to the same crime for the increase of their malice: with threats and shouts they demanded the death of the innocent. For by the persuasion of the princes, and the agitation of the priests, the people are moved: all are turned against Christ; old men with youths clamour, with awful cries: "Away with Him, away with Him, let Him be crucified." All previous praise and honour is changed into lament: all the applause and singing of the Hebrew children, into the howling of raging wolves. No age was wanting, neither sex was silent; no state of life was unrepresented, all the evil-minded Jews and Gentiles agree and consent, to deliver Jesus speedily to death: and hang the blameless life upon the cross. Wherefore all these are guilty of eternal damnation in the death of Christ; verily are they malignant murderers and excessively cruel deicides, who spared in naught the Son of God: but wrought on Him all the injuries which they were able. For they fabricated falsehoods: and perverted things done well and nobly. O wondrous clemency of God; O inestimable patience of Christ; which could not be moved by such wrongs, nor exhausted by sufferings. For herein He gave to all that suffer wrongs a most excellent and strong encouragement; that they bear at least a few passing words: who cannot yet endure hard blows.

Thirdly, thou shouldst meditate how much Christ suffers: and by how many, numerous evils are inflicted upon Him. It is evidently clear from the gospel witness, that first He was sold for a little money by His own disciple; afterwards, by a kiss of feigned peace betrayed to the enemy: grievously reproached by the priests; called a blasphemer by the Pontiff: defamed by the Scribes and Pharisees; accused by the elders of the city: brought before the judge by the servants; by Herod despised and mocked: by Pilate condemned to death; taken and bound by the armed men: scourged and crowned by the soldiers; insulted, spat upon and cuffed by the retainers: detested by the maid-servants; so that they said to Peter, "Of a truth thou art one of them: thou also wast with Jesus, the Galilean." Scarcely was there

found one so poor and base: as not to rejoice in the sufferings of Jesus. O sorrow upon sorrow; O poor and humble Jesus: having no comforter or helper from among the sons of men. Thy acquaintance withdrew; Thy friends stood afar off: they could weep, aid they were not able. Amid most wicked enemies Jesus was forsaken; from the greatest even to the least He was hounded to death: with shame and shouting He was led outside the city, laden with the wood of the cross; stripped of His garments, hanged naked between thieves: fastened with nails, given to drink of vinegar and gall. Grievous were the wicked words; more grievous, the cruel blows: most grievous, the dreadful sufferings of the cross. On His most tender, most holy, most stainless, most comely virgin body they wrought such disgraceful tortures: that from the sole of the foot to the crown of the head there was no soundness of body: but He seemed as a leper to all that beheld. See then now and ponder whether there is a sorrow like to His sorrow: which thy God endures for thee. Number, if thou canst, all the blows, all the wounds, all the stripes, all the reproaches, all the ignominies inflicted on Him by many: and with pitiful heart compassionate Him, suffering all this with patience. Write it on the tablet of thy heart, as a constant memorial: and in thy every trouble turn the eye of thy mind to Jesus hanging on the cross. For this crucifixion was to Christ, after so many sufferings inflicted upon Him, most disgraceful, most bitter, and most grievous. For it was most sad for Him on the part of His friends standing afar off, and weeping copiously: for their grief and groaning He deemed His own sorrow. It was also most cruel on the part of His enemies deriding Him, insulting, and rejoicing over His death: who were touched by no pity for such pains and sufferings. Lo, now thou hast heard how much and from how many Christ suffered: whom every Christian should justly compassionate. If a man were to see his father, or some very dear friend tortured before him with such torments, and hanged on the public gallows outside the gate; would he not at once, as if driven mad, wither away and faint for sorrow? Much more then should the Passion of Christ pierce thy inmost bowels: and provoke thee to wholesome mourning. Strive therefore to cast from thee all carnal love; to shut out all vain joy: that thereby thou mayest merit to be numbered among the devout lovers of Christ; who daily exercise themselves in the Lord's Passion, and so bring all the sufferings of Christ home to themselves: as to think little or nothing of their own wounds and wrongs.

Of whom blessed Paul the apostle, the lover of the Lord's Passion, saith: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who debased Himself, taking the form of a servant, becoming obedient even to the death of the cross."

Fourthly, thou shalt weigh for whom Christ suffered: and for what reason God endured so bitter a death. Doubtless for our sins, which we contracted from our first parents; which also we have each committed by our own wickedness: in in every age or condition, or order, or office whatsoever. "For all have sinned and do need the glory of God," saith the Apostle; whether Jews or gentiles, whether slaves or freedmen: whether poor or rich, whether kings or princes; whether clerics or laymen, whether priests or teachers, whether prelates or subjects: all the sons of Adam, I say, we are all born children of wrath by nature; but by the grace of Christ we are delivered, by the baptism of Christ cleansed: by the death of Christ saved from death everlasting. Whether then it be called the Passion of Christ, or the blood of Christ, or the cross of Christ, or the death of Christ, it is the same; and all this profits us unto salvation: for by believing in Christ, and loving Christ, we are incorporated and united with Christ. For the head suffered for the members, the head ached for the members: the head on the cross prayed for the members and gained forgiveness. Therefore for all Christ died; so that, undergoing temporal death, He might overcome eternal death, and of sin destroy sin: that is, that by the suffering of His Passion He might pay all the debts of our sins. Hence also blessed Peter, commending the grace of Christ and the merit of His Passion, saith, "Christ died once for our sins, the just for the unjust; that He might offer us to God, being put to death indeed in the flesh: but enlivened in the spirit." Hence also it is read in the Apocalypse that the souls of the saints with great thanksgiving fell down before the throne of God: and before the Lamb sang praises for their redemption, saying, "Thou hast redeemed us to God in Thy blood from every tribe and tongue and people and nation: and hast made us to our God a kingdom and priests." Hence also it is that holy mother Church in the Litany of the Saints when she prays for divers needs and perils: directs especially this petition to Christ: "By Thy Passion and cross, by Thy death and burial: deliver us, O Lord." For such a prayer is exceedingly pleasing to God: and bestows greater confidence of obtaining forgiveness: because of the merit of the Passion of Christ. Indeed the Passion of Christ is the

treasure of the Church, which cannot be exhausted or consumed: but is of infinite power and worth. For hereby every debt is paid: every sin is forgiven; and to the penitent the kingdom of Heaven is promised and given: which for many thousands of years was held fast closed. O most sweet reconciliation unto appeasing the face of God: O most worthy sacrifice unto recovering lost grace; O most full satisfaction unto washing away every stain of the sins of the sons of Adam: in whom all sinned and fell. Since then Christ found no man free from sin: therefore He came to deliver all; by love He satisfied for all: by His compassion He willed; by His divinity He was able: by His humanity He accomplished the work of redemption. Whence blessed Paul said, “God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself; for Christ we beseech you: be reconciled to God.” Lo, thou knowest and hast heard for whom Christ suffered, and for what reason He condescended to undergo this death: namely, for all men, of every age and sex, born of the stock of Adam.

Fifthly, thou shalt ponder how long a time Christ suffered, and how long He was in pain; for this is a part of the endurance of His patience: and brings great encouragement to the cowardly and sad. Take heed and read diligently all the books of the holy Gospel: and thou shalt plainly find that the whole life of Christ, from the beginning of His birth to the giving up of the ghost, was spent in great poverty, in persecution and temptation, in toil and weariness, in the contempt and insults of wicked men; and, finally, consummated in the death of the cross: and thus no period passed without tribulation, as long as He lived in the world. But, considering the particular day and hour of His Passion, then from the evening of the most holy supper, the sadness of the threatening sorrow and coming death commenced; when, while His disciples still supped, He foretold them that the same night He should be betrayed by one of them into the hands of sinners: and it continued until after the hour of His burial: yea, even to the third day on which He rose from the dead: for then He appeared to His disciples living, joyous and glorious. Grievous therefore was the sin of man, which could barely be expiated by so long a time and such great pains: for which also it was necessary that the Son of God should be crucified and die. Whence, since human weakness is exceedingly great, and prone to evil from its youth: moreover it also happens that men sin through many occasions and temptations at divers seasons and times both day and night, often even

knowingly, often in ignorance: so that scarce any day or hour pass without sin and offence against God; therefore, lest man should despair of obtaining pardon because of the frequency of his crimes: Our Saviour, Jesus Christ, suffered for us all the most grievous torments, a long time and at different hours: for a whole night and day He bore suffering for the sins of the sons of men: very often shedding His precious blood. Then also verily at those periods He observed the seven canonical Hours to the praise of His Father: not chanting, but suffering and praying for us. Wherefore all religious, instructed by the example of Christ, ought daily offer these seven Hours to God; because Christ presented Himself a holocaust to God in the odour of sweetness on the altar of the cross: and as a chosen ram, caught among the briars of sin, was sacrificed for Isaac, that is, for all the elect. Whereof blessed Peter writing to the faithful of Christ, exhorts them to thankfulness, saying, "For you were not redeemed with corruptible things, as gold and silver, from your vain conversation of the tradition of your fathers: but with the precious blood of Jesus Christ, as of a Lamb unspotted." Our Redeemer, therefore, the Lord Jesus Christ, willed to endure in His most holy body so long a time so many pains: to take away the handwriting of our condemnation; to arouse us to the fervour of severe penance: to give an example of great patience all the days of our life. And in sooth patience is to us all supremely necessary, as long as we live in this miserable life, full of trials; for no man is safe, not even one day or hour, from the snares of the devil and the ruin of sin, in whatsoever place, or order, or office, he may be constituted: unless every hour he be watched and guarded from above by the grace and mercy of God. But amid these evils and perils we must have recourse chiefly to the Lord's Passion, and hide and rest under the tree of the cross, as under the shadow of the divine protection: and deeply and often meditate on the patience of Christ; for it has a most savoury power to sweeten and soften all the bitterness of our sufferings: and to lighten burdens, by whatever man, or spirit one may be troubled.

Study therefore, after the example of Christ and His saints, to bear with even mind all the adversities of this life: and to hold on to patience as thy armour. Complain not of the length of the time, nor of the bitterness of the affliction; but think that Christ suffered longer more grievous things for thee: and therefore it is just thou shouldst follow the same way. For in

suffering for Christ thou shalt merit much: and thou shalt reap thence many good things. First, indeed, thou dost honour God more highly: if thou takest with good will every contradiction from His hand. Thou dost rejoice the angels: who are glad in Heaven over thy endurance. Thou dost edify the neighbour: if thou bearest wrongs in silence. Thou dost confound the devil: if thou givest thanks, when wronged and despised. Thou dost double thy crown: for here thou shalt receive greater grace, and hereafter higher glory. Every present toil indeed is little, and this life is short: but the reward to come is great and the repose infinite. In effect, thou shalt become a martyr of God as often: as thou dost suffer pain willingly for God. Think not therefore that God is against thee: if in this world thou art troubled and downtrodden. Rejoice rather that here thou art humbled, and scourged: so that hereafter with Christ thou mayest be glorified for ever. For oft prosperity is more harmful than adversity: and flattery more speedily deceives than bitter blame. Faint not therefore in thy affliction for the name and love of Christ: but constantly with patient soul endure all, as did Christ and all the saints: who, undergoing pain, conquered the enemy. For by suffering adversity a man becomes holier; brighter than gold, more transparent than glass: more free from vice, more perfect in virtue; more acceptable to Christ, more like the saints: stronger against his enemies, more lovable to his friends. Each man also becomes more watchful in self-custody, more ready to compassionate; more deeply humble, more prudently discreet: more fervent for prayer, more prepared for Heaven more secure from hell. These are the good fruits of holy patience; which are especially evident in the most bitter Passion of Christ: and this is proposed as an example to us all. For this most sacred Passion was in pain the most bitter of all the sufferings of the saints: in humility, the most profound, in charity, the most excellent: in obedience, the most perfect, in patience, the strongest; in purity, the most blameless, in profit, the most wholesome: in merits, the most worthy, in remedies, the most efficacious; in satisfaction for all, the most satisfying, in atonement, the most appeasing: in reconciliation, the most acceptable: in sacrifice, the most grateful; in redemption, the most fruitful, in mysteries, the most abundant: in sweetness of all virtues, the most fragrant, preferable to all sciences, arts and medicines. So great, so high, so long, so deep, so sweet, so devout, so compunctious, so loving, so fervent, so comforting, so savoury, so virtuous

is the Passion of Our Redeemer: that by no human words can it be fully praised; by no tongues of angels can it be worthily unfolded: but it is ever new and fresh; always it invigorates and strengthens, instructs, and enkindles: but chiefly those who, despising all things, seek their solace in the wounds of Christ Jesus.

Sixthly, thou shalt note all those places in which Christ suffered any insults or pains for thee. On Mount Olivet indeed He prayed thrice; there for sadness and fear He sweated blood: and in the prayer He made, He perfectly resigned Himself to the will of His Father. In the garden He was sought and found by the Jews: He did not flee from them, but went to meet them; by Judas He was betrayed, and kissed with a false mouth: by the armed servants taken and bound: by the vile band, as a wicked thief, He was violently dragged and brought to the city in the dark night with torches and lanterns: and He is most carefully guarded, lest He should escape or be snatched away by any one. In the house of Annas He is first examined, and He is questioned concerning His teaching and His disciples; and when He had given a good answer to this: He was severely buffeted on the cheek by one of the retainers. In the house of Caiaphas, the high priest, where many were gathered together against Him, He is subjected to numerous wrongs and mockeries; His face is veiled, defiled with spittle, struck with blows: and He is declared as worthy of death. And, when it was dawn, He is publicly led with hands bound, through the streets to the judgement hall of Pilate: and grievously charged as a breaker of the law and a seducer of the people. Thence He is sent over to the court of Herod: by whom derided and clothed in a white garment, He is treated as a fool, and sent back to Pilate; mocked on all sides, reproached on all sides: nowhere safe, nowhere at rest; hated by all, made hateful to all: without He hears clamours, within He suffers griefs; and after receiving cruel blows and many wounds, as if unworthy of this life, He is led out of the city with the shameful cross: and hanged naked between thieves on the place of Calvary. And, when all things had been consummated that were written concerning Him, in the bosom of the earth, to wit, in a tomb newly sculptured, He is reverently buried by the just men, Joseph and Nicodemus, and wept over by the holy women with many sighs and tears. Behold how many places Christ visited in His Passion, how often therein He shed His precious blood; how many insults He endured with blows, that He might sanctify His people, and

cleanse the contaminated places: in which men often sin and offend God. Who could number, alack, all the evils which are still done publicly and privately in many places; both in houses and in squares, in gardens, in towns, in mountains and valleys, in fields and woods, in halls and earthly palaces? Christ is not there; there is not heard weeping over the Saviour's Passion: but vanity of vanities, jest and laughter in the banquets of Herod, with his princes. Wo to them that have thus separated themselves from Him, Who redeemed them; having their face towards the world: and turning their back upon God. However, the compassionate Lord ceases not to cry after such: and to call His wandering sheep to repentance. For He left men a great hope of His mercy in such a patient endurance of all the wrongs and griefs of His most bitter Passion: and especially in those places, where He was dragged and wounded. Whence to wipe out the malice of men and to cleanse unclean places: He was most terribly afflicted in His most holy body by many. And He, who of old laid a curse upon the world because of the sins of men: now by the shedding of His sacred blood promised all penitents a blessing and remission of sin. Moreover He overthrew by the word of His preaching the idols of the gentiles and the temples of the demons: and He destroyed the altars and the names of false gods; and in place of the sacrilegious rite of the pagans and the calves of the Jews: He instituted the true and new sacrifice of His precious body to be celebrated in many places. For therefore He made many temples and altars be consecrated in many regions to the honour of His name and the saints; that the faith of Christians may stand firm: and the divine worship flourish with the praises of hymns. Yea also, to adorn the place of the dwelling of His glory, and to render illustrious the house of prayer with most holy relics: He placed there the devout and precious symbols of His Passion as an everlasting memorial: and erected the holy cross as a triumphal token of vanquished death, as a gage of covenant and peace between God and man: and as a brazen bow against the fear of the devil.

It is fitting therefore that now in divers places by all the faithful of Christ, by small and great, by poor and rich, by wise and unskilled, by strong and weakly, by prelates and subjects, throughout the whole world, with open doors and in the voice of all tongues, Christ suffering be preached, praised and glorified: and raised higher than every name in Heaven and on earth, for all the insults and pains, wrought Him in many places by many persons.

Thou then also shouldst for the sake of devotion, aroused on this holy Good Friday, picture in thy mind all the places of the Lord's Passion, and traverse Jerusalem in spirit; and often lift thine eyes to the image of the Crucified: and with deep compassion see the sacred wounds of Jesus Christ, how great and numerous they were. Then crave forgiveness, that He may mercifully pardon thee: as often as in any place, or time, thou hast offended Him. Thou canst also visit the altars of thy church, and prostrate thyself on the ground; kiss the pavement, or predella of the altar, three or five times: in memory of the blood of Christ poured out upon the earth.

Thou shouldst also, for the love and honour of Christ, ever hold in reverence all the places of holy Church consecrated to God, all monasteries and hospices, wherever religious life is practised and God served; and rejoice in their good actions, and sympathize with their misfortunes: that thereby thou mayest merit to become a sharer of all the good that is there done day and night to the praise of God. For speedily he shall obtain forgiveness of God: whoever truly grieving for his sins, firmly purposes for the future to amend. He also shall gain great confidence of the divine mercy; who in every matter and petition takes as his help the Passion of Christ: and trusts more in the merits of Christ and the prayers of the, saints than in his own labours and virtues. For our works, strictly examined: are seldom found wholly pure. And therefore it is needful to have recourse to humility and the remedy of confession; ever to seek mercy of God and to place our whole hope of salvation in Christ: Who alone is perfect in all things. For He can speedily and entirely heal our imperfections: and bestow fuller grace on the humble and contrite of heart.

In the seventh, and last place, thou shouldst heed and with immense grief consider, in what members Christ suffered: and what pains He endured for us in every joint and in the five senses of the body. O what cruel blows He bore in the scourging: how many thousands of wounds were inflicted on Him; how often He was struck again in the same place: how painfully He felt all this and yet held His peace. He did not stretch out His hand, and moved not a foot or other member from the blows; but willingly and freely gave up His whole body to the strikers: that He might fully satisfy for the sins of all men. For as it was shown in a vision to a certain religious, as often as Christ received a blow from the scourger; at once He offered it to the Father out of love for us: begging also that He would forgive our

crimes. For the so beloved Son murmured not once against the Father, because He exposed Him to such sufferings; He threatened not them that cruelly tortured Him: He was not angry with them that shamefully spat upon Him, nor cursed them that falsely accused Him; but rather grieved: excused, endured: and prayed for them, that they might receive pardon, saying, "Father, forgive them: for they know not what they do."

But what was the cause of such suffering and boundless sorrow? Assuredly, the many sins of men; who in their many members most frequently sin with their five senses: and grievously offend God. For the members of the body whereby they should serve God, and could work much good; these, alas, casting out the fear of God, with bold daring they give over to divers vanities and wicked pleasures: and so sinning, become the slaves of vice, and members and vessels of the demons. Wherefore Christ, the Son of God, compassionating men and desiring to heal sinners and deliver them from the snares of the devil, received and endured grievous and continued tortures in His most sacred body; that by bodily sufferings in His five senses He might bring medicine to our souls: and teach that all delights of the flesh, which war against the spirit, should be avoided and mortified. That God therefore might not for ever punish for his sin man, who, forsaking the supreme good, cleaved to creatures; the loving Lord Jesus underwent this temporal penalty in His own person and the death of the flesh for our sins without any guilt of His own: to appease the wrath of the Father, and deliver us from eternal pains.

But now turn the eye of the heart to the different limbs pierced with wounds: and pour forth tears with pious affection of pity. Begin from the sole of the foot; and go up to the crown of the head: for the whole body of Jesus is full of the most bitter torment. For indeed, if thou wert now in such pain, or wert lying in bed oppressed with sickness; would he not please thee, who sympathized with thee, and he displease thee, who passed thee carelessly by? See then the Lord Jesus suffering for thee, wounded and dead for thee; and have for all His sorrows at least a sigh; if thou canst not shed a tear. For when blessed Stephen was stoned: men fearful and faithful made great mourning over him. And behold here a greater than Stephen, yea, the greatest of saints, beyond all the saints, hangs on the cross full of wounds; and therefore justly should every faithful soul condole with Him: but especially the devout religious, who has renounced the world. Regard

therefore, first, how grievously Christ suffered and was wounded in His beautiful and innocent feet, wherewith He walked, often wearied, through the land preaching the word of God: wherewith He trod the waves of the sea passing over without a boat, without human aid. For by that virtue and power whereby He created all things: He could also command the winds and the sea, and use them as He chose. But, alas, what a wondrous change: and what an incomprehensible ordinance of God; that the Author of all creatures and the supreme physician of bodies and souls, Who made many lame and infirm of a sudden able to walk: is now so fiercely wounded in His feet, so pitilessly bored with iron nails; so that He cannot even walk nor move: but like the wicked thief is held bound to the cross by cruel bonds. With such pain then was fastened in each foot the blameless Christ: who, according to the prophet, looseth them that are fettered, enlighteneth the blind: lifteth up them that are cast down, loveth the just. And why this? Certainly, to loose the bonds of our sins, and to wash the stains of our feet: which are very often contracted in running, walking, wandering, playing, dancing. O how grievously they sin, who tread the poor under foot: who travel with pomp: who make disturbance in church, and trouble them that pray: who scandalize many by frivolous excursions and dissolute conduct. Wo to those that for weariness in good work and want of devotion, seek consolation in news and external affairs. For if these were fastened by one nail of the fear of the Lord, they would assuredly abide alone willingly by themselves, thinking on the Passion of Christ: or read somewhat from holy Writ, whereby being touched they might be inflamed to the love of Christ: by Whom they would overcome all the bitter and sweet of the world. Blessed the feet of them, who are ready to hear the word of God: who, leaving vain things aside, haste to the church: often engage in prayer, refrain their senses from wandering: so that with a good conscience they may say, "I have restrained my feet from every evil way: that I may keep Thy words." Blessed the feet that follow the steps of Jesus even to the cross: and love to stand there and weep with Mary, rather than go to banquets and assist at shows.

Christ also suffered and was grievously wounded in His holy hands, whereby He often gave blessing, touched the sick and made them whole: with which He took bread and eat: consecrated His body, and gave to His disciples for their comfort. But, O loving God, why dost Thou suffer Thy

hands to be dug with such pain, and to be covered with so much blood; Who didst stretch out the heavens without toil, and didst adorn the earth with wondrous beauty? Alas, holy God, strong and immortal, behold Thy hands which formed the first man in Paradise, without defect, without any vice; now, alack, by evil men and wicked hands are pierced with the iron nails of the Jews; and in the sight of Thy friends stretched out on the cross, then accursed by all: and held as the greatest scandal. But, O good, most sweet Jesus, this wrong and violence Thou didst will to bear most patiently for our first parents and their children: that Thou mightest tear up the handwriting of the decree, and wash out with Thy holy blood original sin, contracted by the touch of the forbidden tree and the eating of the fatal apple: that, whence death sprang through sin: thence salvation might come back through suffering. Therefore at the demand of justice, Thou didst stretch out both hands on the wood of the cross for the wiping out of guilt: and under the impulse of charity, with bleeding hands Thou didst pray for all sinners.

O how grateful and acceptable was that offering for us; when Thou, most loving Jesus, only Son of God, didst present Thyself an everlasting sacrifice to appease the face of God the Father Almighty, Whom we all offend in many things; from which we cannot be justified by ourselves, save by the intervention of Thy most sacred Passion, and Thy death in time on the tree of the cross: whence issued our sanctification and redemption in the gaining of eternal salvation. Give heed, here, to the grievousness of our sins and the bitterness of the wounds of Christ; the affection of His charity, and His pleading for His enemies: His mildness also towards all them that afflicted Him. Very often Christ prayed, and taught His disciples to pray: sometimes with bended knees, sometimes with eyes raised to Heaven; but nowhere do we find Him pray so tearfully and lovingly, as now we hear Him: when with outstretched hands and transpierced feet, and all His members racked and wounded, He prayed for His enemies on the altar of the cross. For then He poured forth a prayer most sweet in the Father's ears, that He should forgive them that sinned against Him. Therefore to restrain the malice of men, who are quick to anger, and slow to do good to their foes: Christ received most wide wounds in His hands, instructing all to do good and suffer evil; for it is accounted very great gain: if a man pays back to his adversaries, not the retaliation of vengeance, but the gift of prayer. Take heed therefore, O man,

poor, frail and vicious: lest with evil word or wicked deed thou injure or sadden anyone, for whom Christ suffered and died; for precious in His sight is every soul that faithfully believes in Him: and truly keeps His commandments. But it is meet that thou think well of thy neighbour and hope for better things; because such a one is either already good, or by grace he can speedily amend. Do thou therefore show charity and beg also God the Father; that whom thou now hast an enemy: thou mayest again receive him a brother brought to a better mind. But if he has wronged thee; forgive from thy heart for the love of Jesus Christ: Who has spared thee in many things. For He was loving and compassionate towards all; He despised not the poor, He shunned not the leper: He mocked not the feeble, He soothed the sad, He calmed the angry; He bore with the perverse, He received the repentant: He instructed the erring, He defended the innocent; He strengthened the wavering, He showed charity towards all: and what is more wonderful, struck with blows and wounds, He ceased not from prayer. Behold how Christ by enduring the evil, by consoling the good, presented an example of excellent teaching in His Passion for both sound and sick: and, as it were with the two arms of His love, drew to Himself foe and friend alike; reckoning not their crimes, if only they will be reconciled to God, and forgive all offences to them that trespass against them: and moreover keep mutual charity.

Christ also suffered very painfully in His most holy head, as in the chief member of His body, for all the lower members, which we are, who believe in Him: and cleave to Him by faith and love. For every faithful soul as a living and sound member ought to suffer and be wounded together with Christ his head in all His pains; for the member that does not feel and mourn for its wounded and sick head: is either corrupt or unsound. Therefore, if thou art a member of Christ, and livest and savourest of the spirit of Christ; give heed now to the head of Christ, the Son of the living God: and see with what sharp thorns it is pierced all round for thy sins. It is not easy to say how grievous, how long, how keen was this pain in the blessed and noble head of Jesus, consecrated above all the heads of saints and Nazarenes, the holy crown of which sharp scissors had not touched: and a hair had not fallen from His head to the ground; unless perchance the impious Jews, with the retainers of the Prefect, furiously tore some hairs from His holy head, or with unworthy hands plucked at His sacred beard.

For they are accounted to have inflicted many insults and blows upon Christ: which are not singly narrated by the evangelists. However, St. Luke tells us that “blaspheming many other things they said against Him.” For some openly derided Christ as a fool: others, more perverse, added insulting words: others, more cruel than brute beasts, ground their teeth against Him, and struck Him with blows not a few; and maybe with their heels they trod upon the sacred feet of Jesus: which recently Mary Magdalene washed with many tears, and anointed. Ah, Lord God, how deeply the points of the thorns entered Thy most holy head: how cruelly they tore the tender skin of Thy flesh with the bones and nerves; so that from the wounds they made streams of blood flowed down Thy neck, down Thy eyes, down Thy ears and face: and utterly obscured Thy comely countenance and all its former beauty. O wicked and provoking generation, why dost thou so severely punish the guiltless? Why dost thou oppress the loving and lowly one; and as in a ring torture His head? Certainly, falsely dost thou lay it to His charge that He made Himself, king; for never here did He bear regal ornaments according to the style of the world: He neither wore shoes, nor desired a crown. No man also did He harm by word or deed: yea, rather He delivered them that were wronged and oppressed by the devil.

Daughters of Jerusalem and all devout matrons, come and see Christ the King, Jesus of Nazareth, the true and peaceful Solomon, sprung from the royal house of David; see how on the day of His crowning, He is crowned with a crown of thorns, by His wicked stepmother, the synagogue: while the devil encourages, and the envy of the priests urges. Then most abundantly wept His most blessed Mother Mary with Saint Mary Magdalene, and all her company utterly desolate: wept also the disciples scattered in the Jewish crowd for shame and sorrow at the sight of the thorny diadem, which was most cruelly pressed upon the sacred brow of Christ, their lord and Master: while the judge cried before the raging people, “Behold your King.”

Think now, all ye faithful, if ever you have heard or read of such disgrace and such most bitter pain in any of the holy kings or prophets of old, as at this time wrought on the Lord of prophets; on the King of angels, the Prelate of all priests: on the Lamb of God, Who came to take away the sins of the world by various torments of bodily punishment. Behold He, Who before was resplendent in signs and great powers; is now most irreverently treated with many mockeries: and struck with rods and scourges. He,

Whom the princes ought to have honoured exceedingly, and to have received for the true King and High Priest; now they dishonour with unheard of insults: and torture with a crown of most sharp piercing. For all work the very opposite of the many favours shown them: and bitterly rage against the Author of their salvation. For instead of roses and lilies: they offer Him sharp thorns. For gems and jewels: they give Him cruel blows. For a royal crown: a garland of sea-rushes. For a collar of gold: striking without pity. For a garment of fine linen: the white robe of a fool with shame. For regal purple: the drops of His red blood. For silver belt: a waistband of thin cotton. For kingly sceptre: a reed shaken by the wind. For a horse He had an ass: for bridle, a rope. For sword, a rod: for shield, the scourge. For buskins, naked thighs: for gloves, handcuffs. For gilded spurs: iron nails in His feet. For battle-standard: the cross with its title inscribed. For breast-plate, the seamless tunic: for helmet, the veil over His eyes. For regal spear: the soldier's lance. For pontifical mitre: the napkin on His naked head. For the doctor's chair: the marble pillar. For goblet, a sponge: for flask, a vinegar cruet. For wine, vinegar: for nectar, myrrh: for mead, most bitter gall. For a kiss, spittle: for compassion, the arrow of scorn: for greeting He received the word of curse. Besides these things already told: hear yet other sorrows of EXTREME DESOLATION. For HE WAS FORSAKEN BY THE FATHER IN HIS GREATEST DISTRESS, AS IF HE WERE NOT HIS BELOVED SON. He was abandoned by all His friends and disciples as a stranger and wanderer. He lost his noble companions: He found most bitter foes. He lost Saint Peter, His defender: He found Malchus, Peter's accuser. What more? For accountant, He had a thief: for secretary, a traitor. For standard-bearer, Simon of Cyrene, who carried the cross: for chamberlain, the wicked thief, who reproached Him. For infirmarian, a mocker: for wardrober, one who stripped Him. For refectionarian, a brewer of gall: for dormitory, the tomb: for bed, the hard stone cut out of the rock. However, amid these wrongs, wrought on the Lord Christ, there were not wanting the laments of friends; but they were concealed and stood afar off: they were silent and mourned: for never was seen such evil in Israel: since the day whereon Jesus was born in Bethlehem. But all these things were done by the divine ordinance for our salvation: and to fulfil the sacred oracles of the prophets. Behold with these weapons is armed our King, Christ Jesus of Nazareth, setting out to fight

against the prince of the world: and to redeem by His precious blood the human race. He fought even to death, He overcame the pride of the devil by humility: the rage of the world by patience: the petulance of the flesh by the most bitter suffering of the cross. He left us holy examples of life: holy good words for meditation; and against all vices He gave most excellent remedies to shun sin: and to attain the rewards of eternal life by the cross. To Whom be praise and glory for every good in Heaven and on earth: for endless ages of ages. Amen.

XXVII

ON PALM SUNDAY, OF THE PROCESSION OF CHRIST, AND OF THE SIX CLASSES OF MEN, WHO HONOUR CHRIST

(First Sermon)

THE children of the Jews taking olive I boughs: went out to meet the Lord. It gives pleasure to contemplate on this, the Feast of Palms, the solemn procession of holy Church: as also the devotion of the Jewish people honouring Christ with great joy and praise. For what the Jews bodily offered Christy living in the flesh: we ought to offer spiritually to the same, now reigning in Heaven. And it is beseeeming to do this the more fondly with devout hymns and canticles: the more God loves the inner worship of our heart: and desires to bring us to the Jerusalem which is above. For on this account especially He came on earth: to recall the dwellers of earth to Heaven. On this account He hastened to the place of suffering: to make ready for us the habitation of a most happy home in Heaven. In token whereof also He ordered an ass and her colt to be brought to Him; and, meekly riding, led them into the city of the earthly Jerusalem, which is a figure of the blessedness of Heaven: that we might hope to be led back by Christ to life everlasting with the holy angels: Who shall raise our animal body from the dust of the earth: and shall clothe it with the glory of immortality in the future resurrection of the just. And to merit this who shall be able to be worthy? Assuredly he, who shall humble himself as a little child among the Hebrew children: and shall become as a pious beast of burden under the feet of Christ: showing himself ready in every place and

time FOR THE GOOD PLEASURE OF GOD. For whosoever shows himself meek and humble among his brethren: and regards himself as a rough ass and unprofitable servant on account of some defect, or unfitness which he perceives in himself; he for his humble self-esteem will please Christ more and be nearer to Him: than that haughty Pharisee, who, like a proud horse, vaunted himself of his good deed. The simplicity of the ass, if he errs, shall be more excusable: than the perversity of the proud horse who kicks against the goad. Christ therefore chose the ass to ride for its meekness: He rejected the horse, which might neigh and bite others. Thus also Christ now takes the simple and lowly man to serve Him; and places on his back the yoke of holy religion: that by the law of life and discipline he may walk a straight and even road to the heavenly Jerusalem after death.

Consider, therefore, what and how great virtues Christ showed us by His human nature in this procession: Who, while He was supreme and rich and powerful above all, as the true Son of God according to the divinity; nevertheless, did not display the excellence of His majesty before the people by worldly pomp: but with much humility and meekness approached the city, rebellious against Him. This is our King, Whom John Baptist proclaimed as the Lamb, that was to come into the world: Who for the salvation of the human race drew near to the place of suffering, to accomplish the work of our redemption: as it had been revealed to the holy patriarchs and prophets. He did not turn aside from the face of His enemies: nor dread the holy place, because of the malice of the people; but with the greatest charity and compassion approached to the envious and enraged, to calm their passions: moreover for their coming excesses and evil deeds He mourned and wept. He heeded not the applause and praise of men: but had His eye open to the future dangers of the perverse: speaking thus to them that securely rejoiced: “For if thou also hadst known what things threaten thee: thou wouldst doubtless rather grieve and weep with Me.” “For the heart of the wise is where there is mourning: and the heart of the fool where there is mirth.” For by sadness the soul of the sinner is amended: and by mirth the state of the religious mind often becomes dissolute. And so much the further is a man from God and the colder in himself: the more intensely and the longer he is engaged in external affairs. The Lord therefore gave good counsel to those that are in honour, and in repute with men, and take pleasure in the society of friends, namely, that they turn their eyes from

things present: and weigh with earnest thought, how speedily these trivial joys pass away. Wherefore let the distracted soul come back to the actions of Christ, performed this day: and cast aside all worldly occupations; gather flowers of good thoughts from Holy Writ: and with interior exercises, as with fresh palms, hasten to meet the heavenly King. And even if she behold, or hear in the chanting some outward matters pertaining to the feast, let her not tarry merely there: but diligently seek what saving mystery be concealed herein.

It is to be remarked therefore that in to-day's procession of Christ six classes of the good are found: who honour the approach of Christ by some pious act. Some go before, others follow: some cut down boughs; others spread their garments: some bear, and others walk near the King. No one stands here idle: no one is intent on chatter; each man keeps his place: each joyfully fulfils his duty. But these things can be beautifully understood in a mystic and moral sense: and so interpreted to the instruction of faith and the discipline of morals. Thus, those, who go before Christ, are the patriarchs and prophets; who foretold many mysteries concerning Christ to the people: and desired with great desire to see Christ. But those, who follow Christ, are His disciples and other faithful converted by Christ; who, forsaking their possessions and worldly cares, perfectly imitated Christ: and drew many others by word and example to a good life. And those, who cut down branches from the trees, are the rulers of churches and preachers of the word of God throughout the world; who by their study gather, as so many flowers and leafy boughs, beautiful and profitable sayings from the holy books and treatises of the doctors: which afterwards, preaching in the church, they faithfully display to the people. And lest weak or ignorant hearers should dash their foot against a stone of scandal on the way, because of the difficulty of the commandments: therefore to make smooth the path of heavenly life, good teachers bring forth many examples of the saints, as flowers of roses and lilies of the valley; alleging now the patience of the martyrs, now the toils of confessors: now the modesty of virgins. But those, who lay their garments in the way; are the good dispensers of worldly goods, who refresh with meat and drink the poor and beggars: lest they faint on the way, by reason of their daily sufferings. These then take of the things that are superfluous for them and also some things that are needful, both of clothing and money: to give mercifully to the naked and

needy; thereby, through earthly alms bestowed for Christ: to receive eternal rewards in the kingdom of God after the burial of their bodies. There were formerly in holy Church many thus ardently burning with divine love: who not only gave exterior and temporal things to the poor, or by vow forsook everything: but also in time of persecution delivered their bodies to divers torments for the faith of Christ. These certainly, above other despisers of the world in the way of God and the procession of Christ, threw down their bodies, as if they were garments and heavy burdens to their souls, and cast them on the ground to be trodden on by evil men; so that they might receive with the holy angels, amid the joys of Heaven, everlasting crowns: for all the tortures inflicted on them in time. But those, who bear Christ, are the ass and her colt: having upon them indeed the garments of the apostles, but going forward at the word of Christ. By these are signified good and devout religious, forsaking the world; who enter the cloister, called to Christ by the teaching of the apostles: take upon them by a rule His sweet yoke and light burden; loving chastity, observing obedience: and living under the discipline of superiors; holding the bit of silence in their mouth: and humbly bowing their back and neck to correction under the rod; and bearing all this for the sake of Christ, Who called them from the vanity of the world, and bound them to His service: piously and willingly throughout the space of their whole life.

But those, who walk on the way near the King, are the apostles: and they from the side catch brief glimpses of His countenance. These are contemplative men, utterly separated from affairs of the world; given chiefly to solitude and silence: often intent upon prayer, reading, holy meditation; and languishing with frequent sighs for the things of Heaven, with utmost desire they long to see Christ in His glory; and by a special grace, interiorly recollected and sometimes suddenly lifted above themselves in the spirit: for a brief space they gaze upon the face of Christ, as it were in a side glance. For deeming all visible and created goods as nothing and of no moment, for the greatness of His sweetness: they despise and cast away every thing, that holds back and hinders leisure in God.

From the foregoing gather that there are two orders of them that praise the Lord; one, which goes before: the other, which follows Christ. And all these with one voice sing in harmony; all proclaim that Christ has come in the flesh: and confess Christ the King born of the seed of David. By these

singers are befittingly designated the ministers of holy Church, appointed to chant, and to celebrate the Divine Office; who at certain seasons recite psalms, hymns and other canticles taken from the histories of the Old and the New Testament to the praise of God: and singing with cheerful heart and mouth, strive to raise themselves and others to the heavenly promises; lest, wearied by the fatigue and labour of the present life, they be delayed in their arrival at the heavenly Jerusalem: whither to-day Christ, the King of Israel, our Creator, of His own will preceded us by the cross. Each, according to his state and order and office: shall receive his own reward in proportion to his toil. Every faithful servant of God then, whether he be a cleric, or tonsured monk, or beneficed priest, ought to be very diligent and ready to sing in the church in the sight of Christ and the saints; and take example from the Hebrew children: who praised Christ with a loud voice even to the highest heavens. For as often as a cleric, or monk chants less livelily in the choir, or withdraws his voice: or also, engaged with vain fancies, thinks over outside matters, and gives scant heed to each divine word; so often does he lose a precious jewel from the crown of his head: and suffer a beautiful and very sweet-smelling rose to be stolen and carried away from the sanctuary of God by the enemy. Let therefore the religious, honoured with the title of chorister of Christ, appointed to chant and pray to God, take care: that as soon as the bell is rung for the canonical Hours, he come not slowly to choir; and stand not there with weariness and wandering mind: lest perchance the deceitful enemy secretly enter, and take the psalm from his mouth, or the meaning from his heart; and he lose the merit of his holy labour by his heedlessness: and offend Christ and the holy angels, because he has done his duty ill. So much for the praise and singing of the good children: to excite the devotion of all religious.

But now let us take further pleasure in examining the apparel and appearance of our humble King, seated upon the colt of an ass: Who, when He was in the midst of the rejoicing people, showed no smile, but wept. Nowhere in all the pages of the Old Testament do I find any of the kings of Israel, or Jerusalem, riding so numbly: or without warlike arms and sounding trumpets hastening against the enemy. Nowhere in all the life of Christ do I find any such action; as now on this day our Saviour performed in the presence of so great a multitude of people singing together: and therefore there is cause to wonder in so unusual a proceeding. Finally, we

read that Jesus often went through the cities and towns, preaching the word of God: also that He was wearied with His journey; but still I do not learn that He made use of the service of any beast of burden, to be seated more at His ease: or to arrive more speedily at the place desired. “But who hath known the mind of the Lord; or who hath been His counsellor?” I believe and remark that this was a divine counsel; to fulfil the holy word of the prophet long before foretold: that Christ, the King of Israel, was to come in lowly guise and the spirit of meekness. Many perhaps knew not of whom the prophet spake: but when Christ in His own person fulfilled in deed, what the prophet had formerly precisely expressed by words; then without a doubt it was believed and well understood, that of Him it had been written: “and these things they did to Him,” as blessed John testifies. Christ therefore came, the King of kings, the Lord, not in the hand of might to fill men with fear, as worldly princes do: but to give an example of humility, whereby they might easily direct their steps to the heavenly kingdom. For there is a great distance between the King of Heaven and of the world: between poor Christ and wealthy Solomon. For Solomon commencing to reign in Jerusalem, was set upon the mule of King David; but Christ, in the beginning of His conflict with the devil, sat upon the colt of an ass. The former mounted to the sound of the trumpet: the latter, to the singing of children. The former rejoiced, clothed in royal apparel: the latter wept, because of the peril of the city, where David reigned thirty-three years. In which action indeed He showed that he belonged to David’s race: Who, claiming the heritage of His fathers, entered the temple of Solomon; which also He honoured, rendering it illustrious by glorious signs and teaching: healing the sick and instructing the people. Whence also the people, rejoicing greatly in the coming of Christ their King, cried: “A blessing that the kingdom of our father David has come: hosanna in the highest.” But it seems strange, that a rude and ignorant people, was not ashamed of so poor a king: nor offended at His lowly guise. For there was in Him no outward show of royal splendour; but, as before He was wont to go barefoot and with uncovered head: so now He approached the royal city devoid of all kingly apparel. And they were not scandalized in Him, because He came poor; but turned the eyes of their mind to the proofs of His divinity: and were the more edified by the lowliness of His raiment. O Jerusalem, behold thy King’s humility and meekness and justice and poverty, above all the

kings of the earth; for, lo, He comes without the armour of strong men, without the sound of trumpets, without horses and mules: without sword and breastplate, without shield and lance; without bow and arrow, without crown of gold, without mitre, without fillet: without girdle, without cloak, without helmet, without bonnet; without buskins, without bridle, without spurs, without standard, without sceptre: without all earthly tumult and military pomp. For all this belongs not to His charge and wont: Who came to teach contempt of the world by word and example. But He took in His riding a poor animal accustomed to the yoke, in token of poverty and innocence; that from His humble gait He might appear loving and lovable: rather than a terrible king and hard master. He took, as His company, poor and unarmed men; the wealthy and mighty He sent away: because His kingdom was not of this world, but of Heaven from eternity. In much He went contrary to earthly kings and princes; because He came to call the humble and poor, such as were His disciples: to whom he promised to give the kingdom of God, which no man shall be able to take from them by force. Whereto by His grace may He deign to bring us, Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, the King of glory: Who is above all God, blessed for ever. Amen.

XXVIII

OF THE RIDING OF CHRIST, NOT IN PHARAOH'S CHARIOT, BUT ON THE ASS OF HUMILITY

(Second Sermon)

GO ye into the village, which is over against you: and immediately you shall find an ass tied and a colt with her. Loose them and bring them to Me. What is this, most sweet Jesus, my King and my God, that Thou sendest Thy disciples for an ass; and not for a horse to serve Thee on this road, which Thou hast often walked bare-foot? Why dost Thou show Thyself poor and needy in everything: Whose are all things in Heaven and on earth, both men and brutes? When Thou wast born in Bethlehem of Juda, Thou didst not seek a grand palace; but a vile stable for Thy dwelling, and a narrow manger for Thy repose: and now, going into Jerusalem, Thou sendest for an ass to be loaned Thee for a short while. I wonder much and sympathize with Thy poverty, that, King of all the earth, Thou dost act so simply: and goest in procession without any royal raiment. O God, was there not one of all Thy friends in Bethany, or Bethphage, to make ready for Thee a carriage, or give Thee one horse: that at least thus thou couldst ride more honourably into Jerusalem, and leave this ass behind? Which of the kings acted thus? It is read in the Book of Kings, that many horses were brought out of Egypt to Solomon, purchased at a great price: and how does it befall that not even one horse remains for use at Thy coming? A rare and new sight, unheard of from all time: that the King of ages has not in His whole army one horse to ride a brief space: but only the colt of an ass, on which no man had sat: which had neither a saddle for sitting, nor a bridle to

hold it. O wondrous clemency of God, the Maker of the world has deigned to be the rider of an ass: when He progressed towards glorious Jerusalem. But there are many motives, and very reasonable and full of virtue: wherefore He mounted an ass and not a horse. Christ, the wisdom of the Father, did this, that the prophecy of His coming might not only be fulfilled in mystic words: but also proved to men in some outward fact as a testimony to them. A very great example of true humility also and of holy poverty He gave herein: to repress the pride and avarice of men: who delight in honours and wealth and a great family: seeking temporal glory, and the ease of luxury. For if our King, the Lord Jesus Christ, had had a beautiful horse in His train: who would be so poor as not to desire to ride horseback, and say that “Christ did the like? Why therefore is it not permitted me”? For the senses of men are prone to evil: and nearly all aspire to a high state. But now Christ, the King, lowly and meek, was content to come on an ass, as the Holy Ghost had foretold of Him, and He treads on the neck of the proud and haughty by His power: Who overthrows the back of kings: and brings to naught perverse and guileful minds. Therefore our King, God before the ages, and man born at the end of time, willed to show Himself such to men in every word, deed and gesture from His birth to the hour of His death, as to be an example of virtue and holiness to all, both subjects and prelates. He showed the way of true humility in the guise of great poverty; whereby any poor man may go up to the heavenly Jerusalem by a straight path without horse, without chariot, without ass, without mule: without scribe, without money, without dignity, without fine linen, without purple. In sooth of this holy way He Himself is the leader, companion, and forerunner: He is the warden and guide; Who, sent by the Father, came into the world: to make smooth and easy the path of humility, whereby Heaven is reached in safety. Let the poor give heed to this and be glad: let the meek hear and be comforted; because for the consolation of the poor our King, the Lord Christ Jesus, when He was rich and the prince of all: became for us poor and patient: that by His poverty He might make us rich in grace: and of mean, great in glory. He Himself therefore came to men in the guise of a poor man; poor He lived among men: poor He died for men. He had not a city or castle, or house of His own, as a noble inheritance; and yet to-day He was honoured by the poor and simple: and proclaimed aloud the King of Israel. Finally, that He might make known

and acceptable the grandeur of His poverty to all the princes of the world: for the horse of pride He had the colt of an ass: for captains and soldiers, poor disciples, unlettered fishermen: for armourers and shield-bearers, the simple people, tailors and weavers: for singers and buglers, innocent children, crying, Hosanna: for swords and clubs, palm and olive branches: which were the tokens of joy and peace, not of war or strife. Christ therefore came, the noble and peaceful King, only and beloved Son of the eternal Father, wishing to make peace again between God and men: between angels and sinners: between Jews and gentiles. Be not afraid, therefore, daughter of Sion: but be glad and rejoice, holy city Jerusalem; for He has come, not to punish thee, but to pray for thy sins: not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it; not to ruin thy dwelling, but to deliver it from the power of the devil: not to strive in word, but to teach by conduct; not to oppress any by power: but to save by mercy: not to seek vengeance of the wrong done Him: but He came to suffer the cross and death for wickedness committed. Understand from His miracles how far He is above all the holy patriarchs and prophets: and believe that He is truly the Son of God, coequal with the Father: born of a virgin for the salvation of the world, to die for the redemption of all. Consider from the works of His human nature that He is meek and humble; spurning the glory of the world, enduring insults: returning good for evil. Behold such as He is: such also are His servants. He chose, as His soldiers and barons, men adorned with virtues, not with costly garments; men, who know how to fight against the devil by prayer: to subdue the flesh by fasting; and to overcome, by despising the wealth and honours of the world: as they learnt from Him, and taught many others to wage the spiritual warfare. With these were united the good children, strangers to malice and strife: singing and praising the name of the Lord, because great is the glory of the Lord. For, from the greater even to the less, all engage in praise and thanksgiving; and rejoice in their heart in the presence and coming of their King, clap with their hands, chant aloud with joy: blessing God for all the virtues and signs, which they had seen and heard of Christ, the King, in their boundaries. O how wonderful and praiseworthy was this devotion: how pleasant the exultation of their mind when the humble Jesus, the Son of the eternal King, is led by innocent children into the temple of Solomon and into the place of the admirable tabernacle: where in type of His blessed Passion were offered the sheep

victims, by the priests of the Mosaic law; who nevertheless were unable perfectly to cleanse anyone from sins according to the justice of the flesh: but according to the faith of the offerers, in the hope of salvation to be granted in Christ, complete remission and the comfort of the salvation of man was awaited. For, when a few days had passed, after that procession and manifestation of great honour: He was overwhelmed with confusion and sufferings more abundant: than ever before He had been honoured by the crowd. Finally, loaded with many insults and wounds, He was hanged on the cross; that the reality of the flesh, which He had assumed, might be made manifest: and the symbol of the legal victim in the sacrifice of the paschal lamb be fulfilled. These two works of Christ then, to wit, the procession and the Passion, are everywhere celebrated in Holy Church to-day: and they possess in them great mysteries, well explained by saintly doctors. For the state of holy Church is figured in these two: which is wont to be frequently exercised by God through prosperity and adversity. The procession, which brings joy, is made and solemnized with palm branches, to the end: that the hearts of the faithful may be aroused to the love of heavenly joys. But this procession will then be perfectly accomplished, when all the saints, raised from the dead, will go to meet Christ in the air with glorified bodies. Then while angels sing, the elect shall enter the holy of holies: holding palms in their hands and lighted lamps full of oil. Then shall each receive eternal rewards according to his labours and merits: made joyful exceedingly in the dwellings prepared for him by God. But the Passion, which follows the procession, signifies this: that by the cross and Passion of Christ, and by many tribulations for Christ, the way is shown us: whereby after death the kingdom of God is reached. Wherein with Christ for ever they shall rejoice: who now devoutly celebrate His Passion; and mourn for pity; shed tears for love; mortify their flesh in imitation, offer prayers in thanksgiving: willingly hear Masses, with fear and reverence celebrate; refrain from things vain and idle: prepare themselves for divine grace by watchfulness over their heart; and in the commemoration of the Passion of Christ earnestly and sadly meditating, reading, toiling, enduring, so direct their whole purpose: that, utterly conformed to the sufferings of Christ here, they may be the more fully glorified hereafter. For when Christ shall come to reward the labours of all His elect: then shall He wipe away all tears from their eyes. The present procession contains a short-lived joy:

but the future procession of the saints shall possess everlasting praise. There is in sooth no festival more solemn, no fellowship more pleasant, no delight greater: no contemplation more excellent, no happiness more worthy, than to see Christ in His heavenly glory with the holy angels; when all the elect have been gathered in the most blessed city of the Jerusalem above, to reign with Christ for ever and ever: while the wicked and faithless have been given over and justly condemned with the devil to eternal flames. From which evils may He guard and save us; but rather gather us with His elect and place us at His right hand in His kingdom: Who by His Passion and cross deigned to redeem us, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

XXIX

OF THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST, AND THE SPIRITUAL CONSOLATION OF THE SOUL

I HAVE risen and I am still with thee, alleluia. It is the word of Christ to the Church, and to every faithful soul overwhelmed with sorrow for His Passion: and as it were deprived of all comfort. Christ then rising from the dead addresses her in the spirit: with the joyous greeting of His mouth, He most lovingly consoles her, saying: “I have risen and I am still with thee. I have not forgotten thee: but MINDFUL OF MY PROMISE, as a most victorious conqueror of death I appear to thee, and announce to thee the joys of everlasting bliss; so that thou mayest rejoice with Me in the ineffable glory of the resurrection, which I have received: because I am never to lose it, nor to die again. Yesterday indeed thou didst grieve and weep much for My Passion: but now weep no more; for I have risen indeed: and am still with thee in the presence of majesty, Who suffered from the weakness of the flesh. Now I am crowned with a higher glory, and clothed with the light of immortality: Who the day before yesterday hung upon the cross condemned to a most disgraceful death. For three days I lay in the tomb; but now I live,” saith the Lord thy Redeemer, “and thou shalt live because of Me. This day I have risen from the dead by the glory of the Father; and thou shalt rise on the last day with My Elect raised from the tomb by the power of God: and to be crowned according to thy deserts. Sing therefore in the voice of exultation; and with great thanksgiving offer devout canticles of praise, singing, alleluia: and raising thyself to the heavenly feasts. With heart and voice together rejoice, O daughter of Sion,

for the hour of temporal sorrow has passed; and the day of endless joy has returned: the hope of thy glory to come. Let the Jews be sad, who crucified Me; let the gentiles be confounded, who mocked Me: let all those fear, who would not believe in Me. But let THE FAITHFUL rejoice, WHO LOVE ME: let all the peoples be comforted, who, hearing My Passion, grieved and wept. Let the disciples draw near Me, who were scattered and fled: and abandoned Me amid My torments. Let the humble and devout come to Me: let the priests go before and the ministers clothed in white; let all Christians approach My table with supreme reverence: and let all the nations celebrate this day of Easter, on which I rose. For I sun the resurrection and the life; I am the living bread coming down from Heaven: Who give life to the world. I am the good Shepherd, Who feed My sheep, SIMPLE AND OBEDIENT: forsaking their own will, and following Mine IN ALL THINGS. I am the hidden manna, the joy of angels, the pasch of Christians, the happiness of the saints; rejoicing the angels with unveiled vision: and communicating men on earth with My sacrament. Be not therefore troubled, as if despised in the world; be not saddened, as though forsaken of God: be not afraid, as one besieged by enemies. I HAVE NOT AND WILL NOT ABANDON thee: I HAVE NOT AND WILL NOT CAST THEE OFF; but in much I will prove thee, and by divers trials will lead thee: and as gold in the fire I will try thee and cleanse thee. AND IN TIME OF DISTRESS I WILL APPEAR TO THEE; AND COMFORT THEE BY MY PRESENCE, pouring in the grace of devotion: FIRST GIVING THEE TO DRINK of the wine of compunction, then ANOINTING WITH THE OIL OF GLADNESS; that thou mayest shed tears, and experience wondrous sweetness: and be WHOLLY on fire and melted. Thus, thus will I console them that mourn for Me in this vale of tears; WHO TURN AWAY FROM TRIFLES: and turn to their interior. I have care of thee: and My eyes are upon My faithful; that they may sit with Me in the kingdom of My Father: and see My glory, which I have had from eternity, and have prepared for My friends. I will give them A FULL WAGE: when they also shall rise from the dead glorious and incorrupt. Therefore was it that I endured death, routed hell, overcame the devil; delivered the holy fathers from Limbo, opened the gates of Paradise: that I might bring all My elect into everlasting bliss. But do not think thy-self parted from this joy, or a stranger to the happy fellowship of the saints; for, although thou art still encompassed by

mortality, and livest in the midst of temptations: nevertheless later thou shalt enjoy My vision, if thou abidest faithful and constant, following My footsteps even to the end: as I also continued in the love of My Father, obedient even to death. Be therefore strong in temptation, and patient in every tribulation: that thou mayest be a fellow of My eternal glory. Nor give up hope, whatever danger threatens: or however much all human comfort is withdrawn. I AM NOT WONT TO PASS BY THE SAD, OR TO SPURN HIM, WHO PRAYS: but graciously to hear him, who calls to Me with groaning. I try him, who struggles: I will crown him, who perseveres. I suffer my beloved to be tried a while; and when he least thinks it, or DEEMS HIMSELF UNWORTHY OF ANY COMFORT: of a sudden I appear and illumine him unaware. Thus I did with My disciples: and with the dear visitors of My holy sepulchre. For they were in great sadness; they lost all hope, they knew of no comfort: they could not tell what to do, or whither to go. Nothing was MORE DEAR TO THEM meanwhile than to weep BITTERLY, and often to seek: whether they could learn anything concerning Me. But WHEN ALL HELP OF MAN FAILED, AT ONCE THE HELP OF GOD WAS THERE. And it befell them much more happily: than they could have imagined. For I made My angels go before to tell the good news; that they might not remain inconsolate too long: but that, roused to the hope of life, they might look for the King of glory. I delayed therefore to appear at once, that their desire of seeking Me might grow, and they become more purified to see Me; thereby to rejoice more abundantly, when I should be seen, embrace Me more devoutly: and worship with greater reverence. I knew the time and the manner to comfort the sad: and how much the minds of mortal men could hold. I did not therefore despise the desires of the pious, nor reject the grief of the afflicted; but I tried their faith, instructed their ignorance, strengthened their weakness; enkindled their love, cast out their fear. And so by weeping, praying, seeking, knocking, persevering: they merited to behold Him Whom they desired. And I fulfilled the word which I foretold; that 'I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice: and your joy no man shall take from you.' Thou therefore, hearing this, prepare thee for the grace of devotion; wait patiently until I come, and again I will visit thy heart freeing thee from all distress: and bringing thee to a state of NEW EXULTATION. Then thou shalt be able to sing psalms with joy, and to know by experience:

how true and pleasant is that introit, ‘I have risen and I am still with thee,
alleluia.’ ”

XXX

OF THE JOY OF THE LORD'S RESURRECTION

THIS is the day, which the Lord hath made: let us be glad and rejoice therein. A great spiritual joy indeed this so solemn festival of Easter provides us. We are to rejoice then therein not according to the flesh, nor according to the vanity of the world: but according to God, in the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. Now more abundant grace is to be sought and a more spotless purity observed: now by the pursuit of a new life the soul is to be transported into heavenly desire. For with just cause the Lord has made this day the most glorious and holy: to rejoice therein above all the festivals of the year. Now let all say, let each say: "Hail, most glorious day, which has shone upon us after the foul darkness of hell." For He Himself, our Lord Jesus Christ, the King of glory and Prince of the kings of the earth, this day arose from the dead: and brought the hope of eternal life to all the faithful, believing in Him throughout the world. For when He rose with the flesh, which He took from the Virgin Mary, and offered for us on the cross: the handwriting of our damnation was wiped away: and the gate of eternity unlocked to us with the victory over death. Open then thy mouth, devout soul: and sing with sonorous voice with the whole Catholic Church: in true joy of heart. "This is the day which the Lord hath made: let us be glad and rejoice therein, alleluia." O truly sweet and noble verse: which is so gladly chanted, so often repeated in the canonical Hours; and with its harmony arouses devotion, and recalls the wandering: and most eagerly draws to Christ. Listen therefore, not only to the sweet sounding melody without, but heed the sense of the holy words concealed within: and by the beauty of the chant rise to the inner things of the mind:

lest thou lose the fruit of thy labour through the music of the voice: who in the Holy Ghost art bidden to chant psalms to God, and to sing with joy to the Lord ALONE IN THE HEART. Blessed he, who is occupied in these good things; and turns his whole intention towards the joys of the interior feast: thereby to tend to eternal glory by means of the festivals of time, as the Apostle says: "If you be risen with Christ, seek the things that are above; mind the things that are above: not the things that are upon the earth." I know not what more gladsome and festive is sung the whole year: than that which is celebrated in these paschal days. For the voice and singing of all most frequently resounds with alleluia: and everything ends with alleluia. Wherein figuratively is shown us that which we are to do in the life eternal: when, delivered from present miseries, and carried into the heavenly repose, we shall praise God with the holy angels, filled in eternity with the sovereign good. Duly and reverently then Heaven and earth with all their fullness rejoice in the resurrection of Christ, and are bidden praise God; by Whom such precious gifts of spiritual unction are bestowed upon us: and still greater and higher will be given in the end. Behold now the elements, bound by the winter cold, gradually unfold: and with a certain spring-tide brightness prepare themselves for the coming feast. For the earth, long sterile and fallow, openly displays the fruitfulness of its power: and brings forth joyous buds. The trees and shrubs produce most sweet flowers: and are adorned with fresh leaves, as with new raiment. The grim frost has melted away, and the birds of the Heaven sweetly carol: and flying through the meadows and groves, rejoice that serenity of sky and fullness of harvest are returning. The sun and moon and stars above: diffuse their light with greater brilliance. In sooth no creature is now seen: but by its renovation applauds the risen Christ. When then such rejoicing is found in the elements: what great gladness should there not be to angels and men, placed over the other creatures of the world. Verily this is the day, which the Lord hath made: as He most clearly shows us by the Scriptures, by figures, by prophets, by angels, by apostles and teachers: witnessing and preaching His resurrection. And where all are in harmony, and the highest as the lowest proclaim the same: no motive of doubt should now rest in the heart; for GOD ALMIGHTY IS ABLE MOST FULLY TO ACCOMPLISH ABOVE ALL THAT WE CAN UNDERSTAND: AND TO BRING FORTH A NEW EFFECT FROM NON-EXISTENCE.

Now therefore, when Christ is glorified in the flesh, and the whole world is once more renovated: do thou also, mortal man, glorify God, and be renewed in the spirit of thy mind. Give thanks always to Thy Redeemer for His boundless gifts: bestowed upon thee and all the faithful. Lift up the eyes of thy heart; behold the way, whither Jesus the salvation of thy countenance has gone before: FOLLOW HIM WITH THE FOOTSTEPS OF LOVE even to the gate of Heaven. Thou hast before thine eyes the mirror of all holiness, and the light of heavenly life; walk securely after Jesus, the Bestower of eternal blessedness: the Ruler of Heaven and earth. No man is more holy than He, none more pure: none more glorious, none more rich, none more mighty. "All power is given to Me," He saith, "in Heaven and in earth." Therefore let thy faith stand firm in Jesus Christ: let thy hope flourish, thy charity exult. Do manfully and be strengthened; strive against the flesh, against the world, against the devil and his angels: fearing the onrush of no adverse power. For the Lion of the tribe of Juda conquers: Whose wrath no man can withstand; Whose hand no man shall escape: for all things have been placed beneath His feet. Now Heaven rejoices, earth applauds; Satan sorrows, death flees: and shall no longer have dominion over Christ. Under such a king then it is safe to fight, under such a shepherd it is pleasant to abide, to be fed and to be taught, to be subject and to be ruled: Who has need of no man, and is rich in all good things.

Do thou also then imitate the King of kings, the Lord thy God, rising from the dead; that for the rest thou mayest walk in the newness of a better life, treading vices under foot, forgetting past evils, returning not to wonted follies: but more fervently raising thyself to heavenly desires. For Christ, having conquered death, returned not to hell: but, having visited His close friends on earth, ascended joyously into Heaven; raising and exalting the form of the servant above the angelic powers: TEACHING THEE TO RISE TO THE GLORY OF ETERNAL BLISS BY THE STEPS OF HUMILITY AND THE SERVICE OF DUE SUBJECTION. IF THEN THOU DESIREST HEAVENLY CONSOLATION, and to rejoice for ever with the angelic spirits: FLEE CARNAL PLEASURE, WHICH BEGETS DEATH; seek the spiritual nourishment of the soul, which Christ has prepared for them that approach the table of His precious body: sweeter than all banquets of the flesh. FOR UNLESS THE OLD MAN WITH HIS DEEDS BE UTTERLY PUT OFF: HEAVENLY SWEETNESS CANNOT ENTER.

And save the flesh be subject to the spirit, and all earthly care cast aside; the promised Paraclete shall not come: nor the eating of the paschal Lamb refresh interiorly. That therefore our inner being may be full of spiritual joy: all malice and naughtiness should be taken out of the heart; that as newborn children we may walk in newness of life: **WASHED WITH TEARS** and clothed in white garments. Then let **OUR BEHAVIOUR BE HUMBLE** and grave: our eyes restrained, our affections pure: our voices ready, our ears open to the words of God: and **ALL OUR SENSES WELL GUARDED ON ALL SIDES**. For the angels, the holy ministers of God, are there, noting our actions, who rises earlier: who prays more devoutly, who chants more cheerfully: who seeks Jesus more fervently. Far from us therefore be the noise of the world, let light gossip be shunned; let our words be edifying, to give grace to all that hear: and for them may the speaker merit the blessing of one, who gives a good alms. Let the actions of the Saviour be repeated; let the good news of Jesus of Nazareth be spread abroad among us: to rejoice and delight all. Let the Crucified depart not from the mind: let Christ rising be met on every side. And, if He is not yet beheld with the eyes: in secret He is touched by frequent lamenting; and until He shows Himself to him, who prays: let him depart not from the tomb. Let the holy angels be questioned, who always enjoy His unveiled vision; that they tell us where the Lord is, or pray for us that He deign to appear to us in our grief: and comfort by His most sweet grace the hearts of them, that mourn. Would, O Lord Jesus, Thou wouldst deign to kindle my heart to seek Thee early with Mary, and to strengthen me in faith: Who, breathing, didst bestow the Holy Ghost upon the apostles. Open to me the meaning of the scriptures; **AND LEAD ME AS THOU HAST PROMISED, INTO ALL TRUTH**: Who art above all God, blessed for ever. Amen.

XXXI

OF THE MYSTIC NAME OF THE PASCH, AND THE LEADING OF A NEW LIFE

CHRIST, our Pasch, is sacrificed. The holy name of the pasch is most noted and known among the faithful: the mystery of which should be very greatly honoured among Christians. Let us therefore all consider: that which was done and instituted for our salvation. For the word pasch signifies the passing of the Lord; because Christ this day came back from death to life, passed from the world to Heaven: to teach us to despise earthly things, and to love heavenly. High praises then we owe to the heavenly Father, Who hath quickened us together in His beloved Son, afflicted and crucified in the flesh; by Whose bruises we are healed, and delivered from eternal death by His undeserved suffering: and again rejoiced exceedingly in His most glorious resurrection.

The sorrow of Christ's cruel death has passed, destroying the enmity of the former sin: and cleansing away all the stains of our guilt. Sweetness of ineffable joy has followed, and the height of everlasting glory; which shall be given to all born again in Christ by baptism, after the exile of this world: as to men coming back from Egypt to the joy of Paradise. For, by the sacrifice of the true Lamb, the spiritual Israel was freed from the captivity of the devil's damnation: and the new people of God passed to the liberty of the heavenly dwelling; because Christ, rising from the dead, changed the old pasch into a new: and turned temporal into everlasting life. Well then does the apostle say, and holy Mother Church everywhere joyously sing: "Christ our pasch is sacrificed." We should therefore always be mindful of the dolorous passion of Christ, as also of His gladsome resurrection for the comfort of our mortality; that by the sufferance of many tribulations for

Christ we may have the hope and trust of reigning for ever with Him. Let us strive now in this holy and joyous time to rise to the desire of a new life: and with spiritual gladness sing praises to God. For Christ is able to aid us yet more: and more burningly kindle us with desire of heavenly life.

But he darkens the brightness of the paschal feast, whoever pants rather for the eating of meats, than for the communion of the precious body of Christ: WHEREIN THE SOURCE OF ALL SWEETNESS and the nourishment of the soul are contained. For in sooth without this most sacred food, every wealthy table luxuriously prepared is empty and tasteless. For as the soul is better than any body: so Christ, Who is the food of the soul, surpasses every taste in sweetness. And albeit now, because of the solemnity of the Lord's resurrection, there is more abundant rejoicing, and better foods are more freely given; nevertheless the frequenting of banquets should be MODERATE: and the appetite of the flesh curbed with the fear of God. FOR THIS IS PROFITABLE TO THE HEALTH OF BODY AND SOUL: and renders man more fit for the praises of God. Let not then the covetousness of the flesh overcome thee: but by devotion of mind conquer, in the power of the Holy Ghost, whatever material delight meets thy senses. Blessed is that soul, which is drawn by the odour of the ointments of Christ to taste the heavenly banquet: and with the psalmist cries and says: "At Thy right hand are delights even to the end: but I shall be satisfied, when Thy glory shall appear." Assuredly all the foolish of heart are deceived, who, leaving aside true and heavenly goods, seek their consolation in earthly things: and without the curb of just moderation covet to have much. "THE KINGDOM OF GOD," saith the apostle, "is not meat and drink: but PEACE AND JOY IN THE HOLY GHOST."

Who is he then that celebrates the pasch in the spirit? He, who passes over from vice to virtue, who rises from the old life and evil ways to the state of new devotion. Who is he, that worthily honours the pasch? He, who spurns worldly honours: and seeks the glory of Christ in all his good deeds. Who is he, that sacrifices the goat on the evening of the pasch? He, who truly repents of his sins: and henceforth ceases to sin. Who is he, that eats the roast lamb with lettuce? He, who sorrowfully meditates on Christ suffering on the cross: and, living blamelessly, chastises himself. Who is the true Hebrew, that crosses the Red Sea? He, who passes from the sense of the flesh to the sweetness of the spirit: and forgetting the things that are

behind, stretches out to those that are before. Who is the true son of Abraham? He, who, from servile fear, sets forth into the liberty of the children of God. Who is the true disciple of Jesus? He, who perfectly renounces all earthly things: and forsakes his own will. Who is worthy to sit at the table of Christ? He, who freely humbles himself for the love of Christ. Who is ready to enter the kingdom of Heaven? He, who despises the kingdom of the world and all earthly splendour. He is the friend of God, the citizen of Heaven: the master of the world. Who is FIT TO GAZE UPON THE FACE OF CHRIST, and dive into the secrets of Heaven? He, who is clean of heart, fervent in prayer: and wholly given to interior things. Who is dear and acceptable to God? He, who is abject in his own eyes: and who holds in small esteem all that passes away.

XXXII

OF THE ASCENSION OF JESUS INTO HEAVEN

I ASCEND to My Father and your Father, to My God and your God, alleluia. The most gracious Jesus, the comforter of the afflicted, after He was risen from the dead, by His most faithful lover Mary Magdalene, bade the joys of the new salvation be announced to His disciples overwhelmed with sadness in His death: saying thus: “Go to My brethren: and say to them, ‘I ascend to My Father and your Father.’ ” O truly sweet and heavenly message: full of joy and love. What is so pleasant for the faithful to hear, as the ascension of the Lord into Heaven; as the passing of Jesus to the Father to intercede for us, that we may approach Him securely, Whom we have offended in many things? For since our sins make a separation between us and God; how can we be reconciled, save by the Mediator, Christ Jesus? By Whom we have access to the Father, Who for us paid the debt of sins: and made ready a place to dwell with Him in the Kingdom of Heaven. “I ascend,” He saith, “to My Father and your Father.” O wondrous condescension of God to miserable men and fleeing disciples: to the sheep scattered and lying in despair. He does not utter the title of His power, nor terrify them with a word of threatening; He does not reprove the crime of high treason, nor reproach them guilty of faithlessness: but MINDFUL OF HIS INNATE GENTLENESS, He offers mercy, and lays aside vengeance; and, after grievous fault and fearful flight, gives expression to the sweetness of brotherly love: and extends to all unfailing charity, saying thus: “Tell My brethren.” O honied sweetness of Jesus most indulgent in all His converse. Who though He be powerful, and grievously offended by His friends and subjects; sent not His torturers to drag the guilty to prison, nor degraded any

one from an office bestowed: but as a good shepherd, who loves his own sheep, pities their weakness, and takes thought for their safety; now indeed He reveals Himself by angels, and now by Mary IN HIS OWN NAME gives PARTICULAR command that word be carried to His sorrowing brethren of the glory of His resurrection, saying, “Go to My brethren: and say to them, I ascend to My Father.” The sweet Master speaks sweet words: and calls them brothers, who had previously offended Him: the more fully to commend His charity, whereby He loved them even to the end. For first indeed He converted them from the vanity of the world to faith in Him; great miracles He wrought in their midst: boundless favours He bestowed upon them; the way of truth He taught them: and chose them beyond all the saints to the honour of the apostolic dignity. And these, after the storm of temptation and the weakness of fall, He calls back to repentance: and raises to a more fervent state of holiness: and rejoices with the vouchsafing of His presence; with open proofs and showing the wounds of His Passion strengthens them wavering in the faith, that they may rise the more boldly: showing them a way whereby they ought to ascend to unfading glory. “I ascend to My Father,” He saith. “If you loved Me, you would certainly rejoice in this word; for it will be profitable to you that I ascend to the Father, Who sent Me: that I may prepare a place for you in the kingdom of My Father, where you shall rejoice with all My elect for ever. Be not troubled therefore: nor overmuch saddened at My departure. I will ask the Father for you: that your sins be forgiven. I will strengthen you in adversity; I will console you in the exile of this world; I will crown you in the heavenly kingdom: where your joy shall be full, and safe from every foe. FOR IT HATH PLEASED THE FATHER TO GIVE THE KINGDOM OF GOD TO YOU POOR AND HUMBLE: WHO, DESPISING THE ALLUREMENTS OF THE WORLD, HAVE FOLLOWED MY FOOTSTEPS.”

And now at this time, when Christ was taken up in the glory of the Father, the hearts of the apostles were lifted to heavenly things; and they rejoiced over His ascension: hoping that, laying aside the burden of the flesh, they should follow Him to glory. For a GREAT trust was in them of attaining the kingdom above: who treading under foot THINGS BELOW lead a life of poverty for Christ. They had moreover the Holy Ghost promised them: strengthened by Whose gift, they feared to suffer neither

chains nor prisons, nor dreadful torments of death. O happy and glorious ascension; by which man's nature was exalted above the angels: and the destruction of the lost angels repaired by the number of men elect, signed with the blood of Christ.

Now therefore take heed thou also, faithful soul, who readest these things, to follow Christ with the steps of love: for the bodily ascension of Christ into Heaven: is the spiritual raising of the mind to God. Therefore let the sojourning of the present life give thee no further pleasure: but let rather the heavenly dwelling with the holy angels allure thee; where the souls of the saints rest from all toil and grief: gazing upon the face of Christ for ever and ever. Often turn over the sweet word of Christ, which He spoke to His disciples before the Passion, that "I go to prepare a place for you": and remember that thou hast not here a lasting city. Sigh from thy innermost heart, because of the many hindrances that keep thee back from heavenly things: and pray to be delivered from present evils: and to go to Christ more speedily. For this is much better than here daily to struggle against vices: and ever to be fearful of divers perils. Cry with the spouse in the Canticles and say, "Draw me after Thee: where abide all good things and joy without end." But, alas, that happy hour has not yet come: it is not yet time to reign, BUT TO SUFFER. Therefore it behoves to await the time of reward preordained of God; and pray without ceasing until God's kingdom come: concerning which Jesus often spoke to His disciples, before He went up into Heaven; that thereby having heard the promises of everlasting glory: the combat of the present life may become more bearable. And so much the more does a soul burn with desire for the things of Heaven, the more cruelly it is afflicted in this life: FOR THIS IS A CLEAR TOKEN IN THE ELECT for the attainment of eternal salvation: if they bear patiently tribulations and labours for the name of Christ. "For it behoved CHRIST to suffer: and so to enter into His glory." And so by patience and toil lies the way to rest: for the Father admits no man into Heaven, save he has followed His most beloved Son by the Passion and the Cross: Whom He delivered up to be crucified for our sins. Lift up therefore thy heart on high, raise thy eyes towards Heaven: consider whither thy Beloved has departed, stretch out thy hands after Him; pray, with bended knees and frequent groans, that He send thee the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, into THY HEART DRY and cold: to

kindle thee and guide thee to the CHEERFUL fulfilment of EVERY GOOD WORK. Amen.

XXXIII

ON THE FEAST OF PENTECOST, OF THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY GHOST

THEY were all filled with the Holy Ghost: and they began to speak with divers tongues, according as the Holy Ghost gave them to speak. To-day, in holy Church, is solemnized the glorious feast of the Holy Ghost; to-day on all sides the gathering of the faithful is glad with votive joys: the choirs of clerics sing joyously in hymns and psalms; the priests celebrate masses: and all together praise God most highly in the coming of the Holy Ghost. For to-day the apostles openly received the Holy Ghost in tongues of fire: and at once they sweetly burned with love within: and without they boldly preached the word of God. To-day the faith of Christ began to be proclaimed: and the number of believers in Jerusalem to be increased. To-day there was great joy among the people: and by the apostles great signs were wrought upon the sick. For FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE WORLD: SO ABUNDANT A GIVING OF THE HOLY GHOST WAS UNHEARD OF. To-day holy religion and the apostolic life took its rise; which afterwards became the mirror of holiness for all religious: and the law of living in common without anything of one's own. To-day the holy apostles were so strengthened in the love of Christ, and enlightened in the grace of the Holy Ghost; that they could not be crushed by any adversity, or softened by any prosperity: or beguiled by any errors, or drawn away from the entirety of the faith by any arguments. To-day men, lowly and simple, have been made wise: and poor fishermen become GREAT TEACHERS; and what they learnt not in the schools by disputation: this they have received from Heaven BY DEVOUT PRAYER. To-day men, illiterate and fearful, have become eloquent and bold; and they that had known but one

tongue: by the teaching of the Holy Ghost, speak of God in the words of all tongues. To-day earthly-minded men have become heavenly: and they that were before despised, are become a WONDER to EVERY nation under the sun; and they that were thought to know little or nothing: bring forth and expound testimonies to Christ from the law and the prophets. To-day an angelic life sprang up on earth, and a new heaven appeared in the world: because the faithful learnt to raise the mind from the flesh to the spirit, from lukewarmness to fervour, from earth to Heaven.

O how FERVENT they were, who were CONTENT WITH SO LITTLE; how devout and obedient they became: who of their own accord submitted themselves to the direction of the apostles. These are the works of the Holy Ghost, Who gathered the hearts of the faithful from divers nations into one faith; raised them to Heaven by the hope of eternal goods: and suddenly kindled them with the torches of His love. By these holy apostles the primitive Church was established and spread through the world; imbued with sacred teachings: and strongly confirmed by many miracles. From these holy apostles and followers of apostles, the saintly hermits of old first received the pattern of perfect renunciation: and left after them many disciples as an example to us. From these apostolic men also and solitaires, dear to God, our glorious Father Augustine, the noble doctor, learnt contempt for the world: who, being afterwards made priest and bishop, founded a community of clerics; and began to live with many servants of God in common after the manner of the life of the apostles: to whom also he gave his rule, which he wrote, for their observance. In like manner the holy father Benedict, a strenuous follower of the apostolic life, brought forth another rule of monastic discipline, full of virtues: by which monks living religiously might tend to the glory of everlasting blessedness. But very many others also, religious men inspired by the grace of the Holy Ghost, desiring to follow the counsels of the gospel perfection: in different parts of the world instituted orders of sacred religion; and obtained such great grace from God, as to shine with apostolic signs: and illumine holy Church by teaching and example. Rightly then should all the faithful honour this most sacred day with special devotion, and call upon the grace of the Holy Ghost: that they may merit to be penetrated and comforted by His visitation: enkindled by His love, cleansed by His dew from every stain of vices.

For all the saints and elect from the beginning of the world were drawn to the service of God, and called away from the errors of the gentiles, BY THE BREATHING OF THE HOLY GHOST; AND WHOEVER HAVE RECEIVED DIVINE GIFTS: HAVE CHIEFLY PLEASED GOD IN HUMILITY.

Even yet the Holy Ghost works in His faithful many good works of charity pleasing to Him, and profitable to others; and, if not evident miracles: nevertheless often He grants the comforts of interior devotion. HE OPENS ALSO TO THEM THAT PRAY and recite the psalms attentively THE SECRETS OF HOLY WRIT: WHICH ARE THE TRUEST TOKENS of His knowledge AND LOVE: He also bestows holy remedies of spiritual strength, against the manifold temptations of human frailty. For He it is, Who instructs the faithful by holy discourses; rules them by prelates, ministers the sacraments by priests: lest on the pilgrimage of this life, they turn aside from the right road, and faint in their labours. He Himself touches man's heart with sorrow for past sins; reproves for daily failings and the smallest defects: NOR SUFFERS THE GUILT OF A SLIGHT STAIN TO REMAIN ON THE CONSCIENCE OF THE FAITHFUL SOUL. He Himself arouses to renewed fervour: to devout prayer, to earnest reading, TO READY OBEDIENCE: TO SEEKING LOWLY THINGS, AND PERSEVERING IN DEVOUT EXERCISES. He Himself withdraws from earthly things: calls to quit of heart, blames light words; soothes wrath, drives out lust: takes away envy, curbs greed. He urges to shun sloth, to keep discipline: He teaches what is to be done, what is to be guarded against, within and without. He Himself is present to the troubled of heart: He comforts the lowly, lifts up the weak; hears the mourning, pities the weeping: grants pardon to the penitent.

As often therefore as thou art anxious and tempted, at once have recourse to heavenly aid: humbly call upon the grace of the Holy Ghost; display to Him all thy distress: and wholly commit thyself to His compassion; that according to His good pleasure and honour, He may mercifully direct all thy griefs to the greater profit of thy soul: and bring all to a saving end. For He knows all, He searches and penetrates all; and suffers nothing to befall thee without cause: He scourges and heals; brings low and upraises. For this is the special operation of the Holy Ghost in this weak body, subject to many miseries, that by true contrition the stains of sins be washed away; THAT

PAST EVILS BE TURNED INTO FULLER HUMILITY: that good begun grow to more perfect; so that thereby NO TIME PASS WITHOUT SPIRITUAL PROFIT: but that every work, word, and thought tend and continue to the honour of God and the glory of the most blessed Trinity. Which to our prayer may the Holy Ghost deign to grant by His most loving grace: Who most generously filled the hearts of the apostles this day. Amen.

XXXIV

OF THE COMFORT OF THE HOLY GHOST

I WILL ask the Father: and He shall give you another Paraclete. When our Lord Jesus Christ was about to depart from His disciples in the body, He promised them, saddened for His absence, the spiritual comfort of the Holy Ghost; Who SHOULD NEVER LEAVE their hearts: but should abide with them for ever. O what a blessed promise of Christ, not of worldly joy, but OF THE COMFORT OF THE HOLY GHOST; which is so precious and sweet: THAT NOTHING CAN BE COMPARED WITH IT in all things human. The holy apostles had great comfort in the humanity of Christ, hearing without hindrance divine words from His mouth, and seeing with their own eyes His wondrous miracles; and therefore not without good cause were they saddened at His departure, to be parted, like orphans, from His most sweet fellowship: fearing to be left without the defence needful to them, amid the wickedness and scandals of the Jews. Wherefore He, the most gracious Master, knowing secrets and foreseeing the future, relieves His dear disciples of the threatening grief, and in place of His bodily presence FIRMLY promises them a comfort, spiritual and ABIDING IN THEM. For they were such: as to be WORTHY of heavenly consolation and the divine INDWELLING; inasmuch as they were now true despisers of the world: and PERFECT FOLLOWERS OF THE HUMBLE LIFE OF CHRIST. BECAUSE THE FATHER LOVES SUCH: for such the Son prays: SUCH THE HOLY GHOST HEARS AND ENLIGHTENS.

See now the inestimable condescension of the divine graciousness: how the Son of God chose poor and simple men to the fellowship of His preaching for the conversion of the world; on whom also for the vile and

valueless things of the world, which they had forsaken: He vouchsafed to bestow freely the precious gifts of the Holy Ghost. Why this? To teach that the glory of the world is to be spurned: and to show **THAT HUMILITY IS MOST PLEASING TO HIM**. Therefore, having heard these so divine oracles, O religious, flee honours and pleasures; put away worldly cares: and make ready thy heart for the reception of the gift of the Holy Ghost by devout prayer. And if already thou art in a good state and hast left the ways of the world; do not look back again, do not be satisfied with the present: but more eagerly pant after things more perfect and more holy; and, in order to merit to receive now **NEW** grace, be **INSTANT** in compunction: and shut thyself in thy cell as in the upper room with the apostles. For this is a likely token of the presence of the grace of God, if a man long to possess higher things; if he inwardly grieve for his daily short-coming, **IF HE ABSTAIN FROM MANY THINGS PERMITTED HIM**: if he diligently ponder how he may progress unto better: **IF HE NEVER DEEM HIMSELF PERFECT IN ANYTHING: NOR BELIEVE THAT HE HAS DONE ANYTHING WORTHILY**. For it behoves thee **UTTERLY TO RENOUNCE ALL LOWER THINGS**, if thou desirest to be refreshed with the comfort of the Holy Ghost; if thou wilt be **STRENGTHENED** by His power: if thou longest to be inflamed with His love.

But we must ask further: by what exercises the holy apostles attained so great a grace. For they did not rise to such great perfection by a sudden change of life, or only in one day: but they made progress by degrees through increase of virtue in the school of Christ, as good pupils carefully taught by a good master. And first indeed they freely forsook all that was theirs for Christ's sake; they renounced kith and kin, and other worldly ties: ready to bear with Him toil and want and the curses of men. On which account before His Passion, He said to them, "You are they who have continued with Me in My temptations." Behold the good beginnings of the apostles; that, stripped of earthly things and tried by adversity; they cleaved to Christ with perseverance. And although at the time of the Passion through fear of death they withdrew somewhat from Him, for this nevertheless they sorrowed much: and, more **FULLY RECOGNIZING** their own weakness, **WITH GREATER HUMILITY** and more fervent love they returned to Christ. For, after His resurrection, they were again visited by Him, and strengthened by His words and the Scriptures: that thus they

might attain higher perfection in faith and the spiritual life. Finally, when Christ ascended into Heaven, they placed their whole hope in heavenly things: nor did they then grieve much at His departure; but were glad rather at the brightness of His glory: so that they returned with great joy into Jerusalem. There, gathered together in the supper-room, with one mind they were instant in prayer and holy meditation: and humbly and with much desire they prepared themselves for the grace of the Holy Ghost to be sent down upon them from Heaven. There, ABIDING WITH MARY THE MOTHER OF JESUS, they DEVOUTLY conferred together concerning the actions and teachings and miracles of our Saviour: and, as it is piously to be believed, they heard and learnt not a few mysteries of Christ from the Blessed Virgin. There, putting aside worldly cares, and shutting out vain discourses, they turned THEIR WHOLE DESIRE to interior things and the heavenly PROMISES; that they might merit to receive in addition to the gifts, which they already possessed, THE HOLY GHOST STILL MORE FULLY. And so it came to pass. For in His coming all were filled, and gifted and enlightened with such graces: that in signs and virtues and teaching they far outshone the patriarchs and prophets. For whatever was veiled in mystery in the law and the prophetic sayings, this by the enlightenment of the Holy Ghost they understood: and they were able to speak in divers tongues. The which was very necessary for the edification of the whole Church: that they should first be perfectly instructed in all the mysteries of our salvation: who were afterwards to preach the Gospel of Christ to every creature throughout the world. The heavenly Father then gave the good Spirit to them that asked Him: and enriched the hearts of the apostles with so OVERFLOWING A BLESSING, that now THEY HAD NO EARTHLY AMBITION; NOR FEARED ANY WORLDLY ADVERSITY; BUT WERE GLAD TO SUFFER REPROACH FOR THE NAME OF JESUS. And with the fullness of knowledge, He added unto them the armour of the spiritual warfare: that they might have divine wisdom against the errors of the Gentiles, to overcome the eloquence of the philosophers: and against the fury of persecutors, might unwaveringly hold the palm of patience. Verily great grace shone in the apostles; inasmuch as men, so unskilled according to the world, in so short a time rose to such a height of holiness: that with the aid of the Holy Ghost their preaching reached even to the ends of the earth.

Following also on what has been already said, consider that the holy apostles, who were most dear to Christ, did not receive this spiritual comfort without labour and due preparation: they lived not without strife and bodily suffering in this world; but became so much the more zealous for Christ and the neighbour's salvation: the more they acknowledged that they had received fuller gifts than others. Of the which they sought not their own glory, nor a passing reward, nor the praise of men: but SIMPLY GOD'S honour, and the glory of Heaven after the toil of this life. Who verily strove to guard CAREFULLY, with HUMILITY AND MEEKNESS of heart, the heavenly-received grace in all their conversation amid many nations: not becoming tepid in leisure, not seeking the ease of the flesh: but COUNTING THE GAIN OF SOULS, by word and EXAMPLE they edified their flocks: and presented very great fruit to God. Their acts therefore and words, it is very profitable for all religious and devout to meditate earnestly; who have purposed to take up their cross for Christ, and follow the apostolic life; that thereby they may be ever eager for progress in a better life: and persevering in the discipline of the Order, by the help of the grace of the Holy Ghost, may take hold of eternal life with all the saints. Amen.

XXXV

OF THE HOLY AND UNITED LIFE OF THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH IN JERUSALEM

THE multitude of believers had but one heart and one soul in God. O how holy and pleasant was that assembly in the primitive Church, gathered by the Holy Ghost; which was proof against disturbance: as long as the unity of faith was kept whole in the bond of charity. To keep this perfectly, very great help is found in the renunciation of proprietorship in temporal goods; conformity in holy conduct: ready obedience in subjects; exemplary life in superiors: loving condescension towards the weak; severe amendment of excesses: due order in divers offices. And that nothing haply be wanting or lost to the community: all according to their power should promote the common good: that love may be resplendent in all for the holy work: and God be thereby greatly glorified. All these good things are seen first practised by the holy apostles; and by them afterwards handed down to others of the faithful: but especially commended for imitation to religious and the prelates of the Church. For as long as the apostolic life shone in the head and the members: good things were with them, and great grace in all things. And because they sought God, and spurned earthly things: temporal goods were added unto them with spiritual gifts; and they were held worthy of so much the greater honour: the more humbly they esteemed themselves and despised all worldly glory. Well and moderately they used the gifts received; they did not become haughty in the dignities and benefices bestowed on them: but with fatherly care they ruled their subjects in great discipline. Moreover in compassion they most generously succoured great

numbers of the poor and sickly; they offered likewise words of holy comfort to the afflicted and tempted: they restrained themselves and others from idle discourse; knowing that for every idle word that men shall speak: each must render an account in the judgement.

But when some had commenced to cool from the heat of faith, and to turn aside without restraint after ease of the flesh: to seek their own, to ambition honours: alas, at once murmurs arose and scandals: and THE TARES OF DISCORD WICKEDLY SOWN BY THE EVIL ONE appeared: to spoil the grain of the good seed in the Lord's field. But this deadly disease and commencement of dissension the holy apostles met with a most wise counsel: and they chose faithful ministers to provide the needful nourishment to the multitude of the saints. But they themselves were instant in prayer and preaching, as they had been TAUGHT BY THE HOLY GHOST, PREFERRING SPIRITUAL TO TEMPORAL THINGS: and they brought forth the witness of the law and the prophets to settle the questions that were moved and the cases that arose. And the Holy Ghost went still further in bestowing His gifts more fully upon the newly converted. For He filled some of the believers with the spirit of prophecy for the consolation of the primitive Church: He appointed others teachers for the instruction of the ignorant; He converted also many priests and masters of the law to the gospel truth: He likewise wrought many signs and wonders among distant nations to spread the Catholic faith. The implacable foe, the devil, saw this and envied; he grieved, and moved the kings and princes of the earth: to rage in arms and pursue the faithful on all sides. And because more plenteous grace flourished in Jerusalem, and the apostolic fervour commenced to make greater increase; therefore Satan stormed more furiously there, and strove to crush the beginnings of the budding Church with the scourge of persecution: and to drive them from their dwellings to foreign nations. But this malice of the devil and temporary persecution of the faithful, God turned to the salvation of many: and to the more widespread knowledge of His holy name. And the temporal tribulation of the just was made the washing away of vice; and what the crafty tempter had designed for their destruction: the loving Saviour ordained for the crown of their patience. For if there had not been so grievous a persecution in the world: there would not be so many martyrs crowned in Heaven. For many of the faithful resolved rather to shed their blood, than to deny the faith: and

more willingly to undergo death: than depart from the love of Christ. FAR BE IT, FAR BE IT, THAT SATAN SHOULD BE MORE POWERFUL WITH HIS FOES TO HARM: THAN CHRIST WITH HIS HOLY ANGELS TO DEFEND. For the malignant spirit could have done NOTHING AGAINST THE PIOUS, UNLESS God had justly suffered it; Who, knowing the deeds and strength of each, by such occasions of sorrow, raised His elect to EVERLASTING GLORY: and buried their foes by inexorable damnation in eternal fire. Thus good and bad, according to their deserts, merit to receive what is just: for the justice of God leaves no good unrewarded, no evil unpunished.

Nor should it scandalize weak souls that so soon tares and many murmurings arose in the Church; for the evil are always mingled with the good: and some imperfect walk with the perfect. For the more holy they are, the fewer they are: as we experience in divers religious places. For the number of beginners is seen greater than the number of the perfect: and the total of the contemplative is fewer than that of the active. Amid many subjects also few are found fitted for office: and for ruling themselves and others well still fewer. Herein appears human weakness, and OUR PRIDE IS HUMBLLED; that we are so prone to vice: and slow to pursue the more perfect. No one, however, can rightly reproach another that he is wanting and unsuited: for as another is weak, so art thou also. A rare bird is true perfection on earth: and in every place are found broken vessels. Every man then should have his eye upon himself, and pity his erring neighbour: nor be angry, if at times he transgresses. Whence blessed James saith, "In many things we all offend." We must have recourse then to the confession of humility: that where the shortcoming of our holiness is wanting, the acknowledgement of our own weakness may supply. AND SO MUCH THE MORE HUMBLE LET US BE IN ALL THINGS: THE MORE DISTANT WE ARE FROM TRUE perfection. In sinning and falling we are brethren: no one is sure of his perseverance. As long then as we live here: it is necessary to bear with the weak: and also to have some foes. For Christ long bore with the imperfections of His disciples: and often heard the calumnies of the Pharisees: Who was in all things perfect. But God knows that the adversities of this world lead to much good: which are seldom wanting to the good and right of heart. For by these thorns and distresses the soul is drawn back from earthly pleasures; the heart is aroused to the

love of heavenly things: a man is exercised in patience; he learns to compassionate the afflicted, he is humbled in grief: he is made like to the sufferings of Christ; he becomes more compunctious, less dissipated: he prays more fervently, he groans more frequently; he wearies of living, he longs to be dissolved and to be with Christ: because there is no peace in this world. But the loving Lord, Who knows what is more wholesome for us: often delays to grant the desires of His servants, for the sake of better: that thereby they may be the more fitted in purity to obtain the promised joys in Heaven. He hears their cry, He sees the trouble of the afflicted; but He does not immediately take away their grief: that they may merit the more by endurance of evils. He pities certainly and hears unto their salvation: but not always unto their own desire. And because He decrees to give them a kingdom of everlasting happiness: He mingles with their life divers cups of bitterness; that they may not place their hope in earthly things: nor love their exile more than the fatherland of heavenly bliss.

But temporal miseries, patiently borne, avail very much for the washing away of sins: for the reconciliation of the divine mercy, for the lessening of purgatorial pain: for the gaining of greater grace, for the increase of higher glory to come. What man is so pure, so guarded and perfect in all his conduct from morning even unto night; who does not fail sometimes in word or deed, or thought, knowingly or unknowingly? Who is possessed of so good a conscience; that he has nothing to confess? Who is so chaste and abstemious; that he fears not to be reprov'd of some fault in the judgement to come? For all things shall be very closely searched in the presence of God, the most righteous judge: even those things that now seem of little or no account. While therefore there is time, and room for mercy: let us all together repent: and fervently amend ourselves. God is kind: He freely pardons our faults: if we truly acknowledge and grieve for them. And since we are brothers in Christ, let us pray for one another, as brotherly charity demands: let us serve one another, support one another, warn one another, comfort one another: rejoice together, be sad together. Let us love one another, as Christ also hath loved us, and delivered Himself for us; Who long bore with us in our offences of the past, and still daily bears with our imperfections, in the hope of amendment: that we may learn to compassionate our neighbours, and pray for them. Heeding these things and doing them, we shall fulfil the law of Christ, and we shall be His true

disciples and most dear friends; beloved of the Father, adopted by the Son, enkindled by the Holy Ghost: predestined and BLESSED by all the holy Trinity. Then also of us shall that be able to be said and verified, which is read of the primitive Church in the Acts of the Apostles; that the multitude of believers had but one heart and one soul in God: and all things were common unto them. Amen.

OF HEARING AND SPEAKING GOOD WORDS

OUR beloved Lord Jesus Christ saith, Blessed are they that bear the word of God and keep it. Give heed now to those which here follow.

A good word is praiseworthy. An idle word, is better unspoken. A humble word, very greatly edifies. A mild word, breaketh wrath. A harsh word, troubles hearts. A discreet word, gives understanding. A sweet godly word, makes glad. A comfortable word, is a golden word. A wise word, is very profitable in season. A hasty word, drives away friends. A loose word, is shameful. A sincere word, is worthy of honour. A serviceable word, merits grace. A prudent word, is very precious, and necessary to every man, who wishes to be blameless in his life. IT MUST BE A VERY GOOD WORD OF EDIFICATION, TO BE WORTH MORE THAN SILENCE. It is better to hold one's peace, than to quarrel. All words are not to be believed, nor to be carried further.

To be silent and endure, acquires peace and gives gladness. As long as you live, you must learn to suffer, to speak little, to pray often, to aid the weak, to shun the evil. To undergo a little, brings much repose. To seek no dignity, to desire no honour, is the straight way to eternal life.

Set your trust and hope in God alone. Be humble and merciful towards the unfortunate without exception. Act according to the counsel of God, and turn from evil paths, thus shall you please God well, and escape the enemy's snares, by God's help grow in virtue, and stand firmly from within.

So noble is virtue and a good holy life, that it surpasses all beauty, and wealth and strength, and merits with certainty eternal life. Virtue overcomes all malice, and the vanity of the world, resists the temptation of the enemy, and compels the weak body to obey reason and the Holy Ghost.

God must strengthen us all in virtue, and save us from all sins, that after this mortal life we may be made worthy to go into life everlasting. Amen.

In all our needs and at every moment, in every beginning and end, may Mary, the holy Mother of God, assist us, with Jesus, her beloved Son. Amen.

In the year of the Lord 1456.

Ended and written by the hands of brother Thomas Kempis.

PRAYERS AND MEDITATIONS ON THE LIFE OF CHRIST

THOMAS A KEMPIS

E-BOOK ALSO AVAILABLE IN PAPERBACK.

BY THOMAS HAEMERKEN À KEMPIS CANON REGULAR OF THE ORDER OF ST.
AUGUSTINE

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CONTENTS

PRAYERS AND MEDITATIONS ON THE LIFE OF CHRIST

INTRODUCTION

TREATISE I

PART I

DEVOUT MEDITATION ON THE LIFE OF OUR SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST, AND UPON THE BENEFITS WROUGHT BY HIM FOR US, WITH THANKSGIVING THEREFOR

PREFACE

CHAPTER I

Devout thanksgivings for the whole Life of Jesus Christ, the Mediator between God and man: and firstly a prayer arousing the soul to the praise of God

CHAPTER II

A Prayer concerning the creation of the first man, and his unhappy fall

CHAPTER III

Of the reinstatement of man, and the promise of Christ's coming

CHAPTER IV

Of the redemption of the human race by the mystery of the Incarnate Word

CHAPTER V

Of the birth and poverty of the Lord Jesus

CHAPTER VI

Of the hardships and want of Jesus in His low estate

CHAPTER VII

Of the crying of the Infant Jesus

CHAPTER VIII

Of the suckling of the hungry Jesus

CHAPTER IX

Of the painful Circumcision of the Lord Jesus

CHAPTER X

Of the bestowal of the Saving Name of Jesus

CHAPTER XI

Of the Epiphany of Jesus, and the devout oblation of the Holy Kings

CHAPTER XII

Of the Purification of Blessed Mary, and the Presentation of Jesus

CHAPTER XIII

Of the persecution of Jesus, and His flight into Egypt

CHAPTER XIV

Of the Holy Innocents, put to death by Herod for the Name of Jesus

CHAPTER XV

Of the finding of Jesus in the Temple

CHAPTER XVI

Of the holy and bidden life of the lowly Jesus

CHAPTER XVII

Of the Baptism of Jesus, and our sanctification in its waters

CHAPTER XVIII

Of the fasting, and the temptations, of the all-unconquered Jesus

CHAPTER XIX

Of the holy preaching, and the saving Doctrine of Jesus

CHAPTER XX

Of the glorious miracles, and the kindness and goodness of Jesus

CHAPTER XXI

Of the Example, and the Holy Life, of Jesus, and His tribulations in the world

CHAPTER XXII

Of the Feast of Palms, and the lowly entry of Jesus into Jerusalem

CHAPTER XXIII

Of the Lord's Supper, in which, after partaking of the Paschal Lamb, Christ Jesus instituted the Sacrament of His Own Body and Blood

CHAPTER XXIV

Of the Washing of the feet, and the sacred discourse of Jesus, at the Supper

PART II

OF THE PASSION OF CHRIST, ACCORDING TO THE FOUR EVANGELISTS

CHAPTER I

Of the selling of Jesus by the perfidious traitor Judas

CHAPTER II

Of the sadness and dread which Jesus endured for our sakes

CHAPTER III

The thrice-repeated prayer, the prostration before the Father of the Lord Jesus, and the resignation by Him of His Own Will

CHAPTER IV

How the Lord Jesus went to meet His betrayer

CHAPTER V

The fell seizure and leading away of the Lord Jesus

CHAPTER VI

The forsaking of the Lord Jesus, and the flight of the Apostles

CHAPTER VII

The arraignment of the Lord Jesus before Annas, the Priest

CHAPTER VIII

Of Blessed Peter, the Apostle's, thrice-repeated denial

CHAPTER IX

The leading away of the Lord Jesus from Annas to Caiaphas the Priest, and the Lord's standing before him

CHAPTER X

The insults, the mockings, and the smittings of the Head, of the Lord Jesus

CHAPTER XI

The arraignment, and the standing, of the Lord Jesus before Pilate

CHAPTER XII

How the Lord Jesus was set at nought by Herod

CHAPTER XIII

Concerning the savage clamour of the Jews,—“Away with Him! Crucify Him!”

CHAPTER XIV

The stripping naked, the binding to the pillar, and the scourging of the Lord Jesus

CHAPTER XV

Of the stripping, the mocking, the crowning, and the smiting of the Head, of the Lord Jesus

CHAPTER XVI

Of the unjust condemnation of Jesus to death

CHAPTER XVII

Of the bearing by Jesus of His Cross, and His being led forth to the place which was called Calvary

CHAPTER XVIII

Of the Crucifixion, naked, of the Lord Jesus; and of His hanging for many long hours aloft upon the Cross

CHAPTER XIX

Of the Wounds of Jesus, and the shedding of His precious Blood

CHAPTER XX

Of the tender pleading of Jesus for His enemies

CHAPTER XXI

Of the plundering, and the sharing, of the garments of Christ

CHAPTER XXII

Of the revilings of the Jews, and the strong perseverance of Jesus on the Cross

CHAPTER XXIII

Of the Word spoken on the Cross to the thief

CHAPTER XXIV

Of the illustrious title of the Name of Jesus set up above His Head upon the Cross

CHAPTER XXV

Of the suffering of the Lord with His Mother's grief, and His commendation the one to the other of Blessed Mary and St. John

CHAPTER XXVI

Of the transcendent virtues of the Blessed Virgin, and of her grief and tears

CHAPTER XXVII

Of the lonely dereliction of the Lord Jesus on the Cross

CHAPTER XXVIII

Of the thirst of the Lord Jesus as He hung upon the Cross

CHAPTER XXIX

Of the fulfilment of the Scriptures in the death of Christ; and of the Word "It is finished"

CHAPTER XXX

Of the woeful departure from this world of the Lord Jesus

CHAPTER XXXI

Of the wan and piteous appearance of Jesus, when on His Soul leaving His Body, evident signs of death showed themselves in Him

CHAPTER XXXII

Of the cruel piercing of the most sacred Side of the Lord Jesus after His death

CHAPTER XXXIII

The taking down of the Lord Jesus from the Cross

CHAPTER XXXIV

Prayers to the several parts of Christ's Body: and first to His Feet

CHAPTER XXXV

Of the adorable Burial of the Lord Jesus

TREATISE II

PRAYERS CONCERNING THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST, DIVIDED INTO TWO PARTS

PART I

CONCERNING THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST, AND HIS APPEARANCES

CHAPTER I

Of the victory of our Lord Jesus Christ upon the Cross, His triumph over death, and His most joyful Resurrection from the grave

CHAPTER II

Of the devout visitation of the Holy Sepulchre of our Lord Jesus Christ

CHAPTER III

Of the appearance of Jesus to Mary Magdalene in the form of a gardener

CHAPTER IV

Of the great merits, and privileges of grace, of blessed Mary Magdalene

CHAPTER V

Of holy Mary Magdalene's great sorrow of heart at the Passion of the Lord

CHAPTER VI

Of the joyful and loving appearance of Christ to His Mother when she had withdrawn to her secret chamber

CHAPTER VII

Of the appearance of Christ to St. Peter in secret; and of St. Peter's running with St. John to the Sepulchre

CHAPTER VIII

A prayer for obtaining from God the grace of tears

CHAPTER IX

Of the profit and grace of holy tears

CHAPTER X

Of the tears of Jesus over Lazarus

CHAPTER XI

Of the appearance of Christ, in the form of a Stranger, to the two disciples going to Emmaus

CHAPTER XII

Of the recognition of Christ in the breaking of bread

CHAPTER XIII

Of the appearance of Christ to the disciples in Jerusalem, when it was late, and the doors were shut

CHAPTER XIV

Of the appearance of Christ, on the octave of Easter, when St. Thomas the Apostle was present

CHAPTER XV

Of the touching of the sacred Wounds of Christ by the hand of St. Thomas the Apostle

CHAPTER XVI

A prayer concerning the five sacred Wounds of Jesus Christ

CHAPTER XVII

Of the Armorial bearings of Christ, the Cross, the Nails, the Spear, and the Crown of Thorns

CHAPTER XVIII

Of the appearance of Christ to the seven disciples as they were fishing in the Sea of Tiberias

CHAPTER XIX

Of the meal taken by Christ with those same disciples of His

CHAPTER XX

Of the sweet converse of Jesus with St. Peter and St John the Apostle about loving Him

CHAPTER XXI

Of the appearance of Christ to the eleven disciples on Mount Thabor in Galilee

PART II

OF THE ASCENSION, OF PENTECOST, AND OF CERTAIN OTHER MATTERS

CHAPTER I

Of the Ascension of the Lord, and of His last appearance

CHAPTER II

Of the appearance of Angels in white garments

CHAPTER III

Of the sending of the Holy Ghost upon the disciples of Christ at the Feast of Pentecost

CHAPTER IV

A Prayer of thanksgiving to Christ for His Incarnation, Passion, Resurrection, Ascension, and Mission of the Holy Ghost with a fuller bestowal of gifts

CHAPTER V

Prayer concerning the gifts of the Holy Ghost against divers diseases of the soul

CHAPTER VI

A prayer concerning the cheerful praise of the Angels in Heaven, and for obtaining the grace of devotion in the Divine Office

CHAPTER VII

Of the preaching of the Apostles, and the spreading of the most Holy Name of our Lord Jesus Christ throughout the world, for the Salvation of men

PRAYERS AND MEDITATIONS ON THE LIFE OF CHRIST

INTRODUCTION

IN his dedication of the first English translation of this book, “To the Verie Venerable, His most honored deare Lady Marie Tredway First Abesse of Sion. Canonesses Regulars of S. Augustins Order established at Paris. And to her vertuous daughters,” the Rev. “Thomas Carre” (for forty years their chaplain) wrote thus: “I tooke the libertie in the year 1636. To addresse unto you the following of Christ under the name of Thomas of Kempis your brother: where I told you that if that truth should chance to be contested you should rather use prescription then processe &c. ... I now returne to you againe with another present of the same Authour and brother, which is contested by none.”

The words “contested by none” are perhaps stronger than one would nowadays care to use; but the matter is one which cannot be fitly discussed in a short introduction like the present. Those who are curious about it will find it exhaustively treated by Dr. M. J. Pohl, in an essay published in 1895, and at pages 385 to 397 of his edition of the text.

I shall here take the question of authorship for granted, and shall confine myself to setting out a few facts about Thomas à Kempis which may possibly be of interest to those using a book so much more subjective in its form than the “Imitation”; and to a brief account of former translations of it into English.

Thomas à Kempis was so called from Kempen, the place of his birth. His family name was Haemerken. His parents (John and Gertrude) were in humble circumstances. He was born in 1380, and had a brother, John, fifteen years older than himself. Soon after his birth his brother left Kempen, and a few years later joined the “Brotherhood of the Common Life” at Deventer. When Thomas was in his thirteenth year he also left home and went in search of his brother. What befell him shall be told in his own words:

“When I reached Deventer, whither I had gone in order to pursue my studies, I asked my way to the house of the Canons Regular at Windesheim. There I found my brother. He advised my going to Master Florentius, Curate of the Church at Deventer, a devout and much revered priest, whose good report, spread throughout the Upper Provinces, had already drawn me to love him.... When I presented myself before this reverend father he welcomed me at once, kept me of his charity for a while in his own house, placed me at school, and provided me with the books which he thought I needed. Afterwards he found me a home with an honourable and devout lady, who was most good and kind to me and to many other students. Being thus brought into touch with this holy man [Florentius] and his brethren, I marked well, and rejoiced in, their devout life and conversation.... Never before do I remember to have seen men so devout, and so full of love towards God and their fellow-men. Living in the world, they were altogether unworldly.” “They were of one heart and one mind in God: what each possessed was held in common: and being content with plain food and clothing, they took no thought for the morrow.” “Master John Boëme, Rector of the school, was also choir-master; and by his orders I used to sing in the choir along with my schoolfellows. Whenever I saw my patron Florentius standing in the choir, his mere presence, even though he did not look about, filled me with such awe that I did not dare to chatter.” “It happened once, as I was near him in the choir, that he turned to the book, and joined us in singing. Being close behind me, he put his hands on my shoulders; and I stood like a statue, scarcely daring to move, so overcome was I by the great honour he had done me.”

Later—it must have been in the year 1398—Florentius Radewyn took Thomas back into his own house; and our author tells the story of that part of his life thus:

“In this house some twenty priests lived together in community.... There were also three lay-brothers, of whom one was the procurator and did the marketing, one was in charge of the kitchen, and the third mended the clothes.” “Here I learnt to write neatly, and studied Holy Scripture, moral philosophy, and the practice of devout meditation.... What I earned as a copyist I made over to the common purse, and all that I needed was provided for me by my beloved Master Florentius, who was like a father to me in all things.”

In the year 1399, moved thereto by a dream and by the advice of the saintly Florentius, he sought admission to the newly established monastery of Agnetenberg, of which his brother was then Prior. Seven years later he was professed, and in 1413—being then thirty-three years old—he was ordained priest.

At Agnetenberg he spent practically the rest of his life; and died there in the year 1471. In 1425 he was made Sub-Prior of the monastery, and he acted (probably in 1432) for a short time as its Procurator; but the office was not one to which he was suited, and he was soon relieved of it, and re-elected Sub-Prior. This post he seems to have resigned somewhere about the year 1456, and to have afterwards held no particular office in the monastery. From the time of his admission to the monastery till within a few months of his death he kept the monastery Chronicle; and his death is thus recorded in it by its continuator:

“In the same year (1471), on the feast of St. James the Less, after Compline, died our dearly loved Brother Thomas Haemerken, born at Kempen, a town in the diocese of Cologne. He was in the ninety-second year of his age, the sixty-third [it was really the sixty-fifth] of his religious clothing, and the fifty-eighth of his priesthood. In his youth he was a disciple, at Deventer, of Master Florentius, who sent him to his [Thomas’s] brother, who was then Prior of Agnetenberg. He was then twenty years of age; he received the habit from his brother after six years’ probation, and throughout his monastic life he underwent great poverty, temptations, and labours. He copied our Bible and many other books, some for the use of the convent, and others for sale. Further, for the edification of the young he composed divers small treatises in a plain and simple style, but full of wisdom and practical utility. He had a special devotion to the Passion of our Lord, and excelled as a comforter of the tempted and distressed. At length, in his old age, after suffering from dropsy of the legs, he fell asleep in the Lord. He was buried in the East Cloister, by the side of Brother Peter Herbort.”

Thomas à Kempis is described by his contemporaries as a man of somewhat less than average height, with a brownish, high-coloured face, lit up by bright piercing eyes, the sight of which was so good that even in extreme old age he did not need spectacles.

During his sub-priorate he acted as novice-master, and throughout his monastic life he was a laborious and beautiful copyist. He was no scholar in the then (Renaissance) sense of the term, nor was he a great orator; but he is said to have been always ready to preach—and preach well—after making a brief meditation, or, if tired, taking a short nap. He was ever the first to come to choir and the last to leave it. During the chanting of the Psalms he stood upright, never leaning or supporting himself in any way; and he was often noticed to be standing on tiptoe, with his eyes raised heavenwards. To one who twitted him with being fonder of Psalms than of salmon (apparently a not uncommon monkish pleasantry) he is said to have answered: “Yes, but I hate to see men not attending to them.” He was happier in his cell than out of it, and took little or no interest in the affairs of the outside world. His favourite motto (see Frontispiece) is said to have been, “I sought for rest, but found it not save in a little corner with a little book.” Of a true Religious, he tells us, “silence should be the friend, work the companion, and prayer the helper.” He scourged himself in his cell at least once a week, singing the while a hymn, the first words of which were “Stetit Jesus.”

Such, briefly, were the chief characteristics of the author of this book; and we may now pass on to consider the previous English “translations” of it.

The first is that of Father Miles Pinkney, who wrote under the name of “Thomas Carre.” It was published in Paris in 1664, and is now very rare. Carre’s translation—though every now and then a difficult phrase is shirked in it—is complete and faithful. Its fault is that it is so faithful in the way of simply turning the Latin words into Latin-English, that were it reproduced few people would care to use it.

The next in order is a Protestant translation by Henry Lee, LL.B., the first edition of which was published in 1760, and the second (identical with the first) in 1762. Its title-page runs thus: “Meditations and Prayers on the Life and Loving-kindnesses of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, in four Parts, etc. Written originally in Latin by Thomas à Kempis, and now translated into English for the Benefit of devout Christians by Henry Lee, LL.B., etc.”

But in his preface the “translator” writes thus: “It will be proper to observe that as Castalio and Dean Stanhope have taken liberties, and great ones too, in many places, in their versions of the ‘Imitation of Christ,’ so

the like and perhaps greater liberties have been taken in the translation of this work.... One chapter in the Second Book is wholly left out. I must remark, too, that as I have often abridged some of his sentiments, where he seems to have grown languid; so I have altered and enlarged upon others, where it was needful either to rectify some error, or to set some circumstance as far as I was able in a clearer light.... I have inserted some particulars which he had omitted, and which were I thought necessary to be added, as well as have endeavoured for a further manifestation of the wisdom of God in the mystery of the Gospel to point out what is little attended to, the end of their being recorded; occasionally shewing also the accomplishment of the prophecies in God our Saviour, and particularly of the Psalms. Lastly, to several or most of the Prayers are added some few expressions in order to adapt them the more to the occasion, and to make them the more evident petitions for a conformity to the Son of God. ‘All which’ (to use Dr. Stanhope’s words in his preface to the ‘Christian Pattern’) ‘the reader hath this warning of, to prevent any objections, which might otherwise be raised against the faithfulness of the undertaking.’ For I was not so desirous of servilely following the letter, in order to gain any reputation of being the faithful translator, as of preserving the spirit and following the plan, and enforcing the purpose of the author, though it could not well be done otherwise than by impartially omitting what seemed foreign to it, or by adding what I was persuaded would contribute to it.”

The outcome of Mr. Lee’s system of “translation” is that only about three-tenths of his book come from Thomas à Kempis, the rest being Mr. Lee’s; and that its title-page is therefore misleading.

We now come to another Protestant “translation” by the Rev. Dr. S. Kettlewell, two editions of which were published in 1892, and a third (after his death) in 1894.

Dr. Kettlewell writes thus (page xlvii of the Preface, ed. 1894):

“It is necessary to notice that a translation of the ‘De Vitâ’ was made into English by Henry Lee, LL.B., in 1760. But in this case, so much of the translator’s reflections and other references to Scripture are added, that it is difficult to tell what is really Lee’s and what belongs to Thomas à Kempis, to whom the whole volume is inscribed [sic]. It is most desirable, therefore, that a new translation be made of the ‘De Vitâ,’ in which rarely is there a word given but what has been written by the devout author himself. This is

as necessary as the re-authentication of its real author; that the public may have some confidence that they are using a most precious and veritable treatise of the author of the ‘Imitation’—Thomas à Kempis.”

And further on in his Preface (para. 13, page li), Dr. Kettlewell writes:

“A few observations must be made about this undertaking before concluding. As in some of the former editions of the ‘Imitation’ it was found desirable to omit certain passages, so also has it been felt advisable to do so, even to a greater extent, in the ‘De Vitâ.’ Any words sanctioning Mariolatry, and the Invocation of Saints and Angels, or any occasional allusion to some corruption or error prevalent in the Pre-Reformation Church, are carefully excluded. Indeed three entire chapters are left out: two in the second Part, which to a certain extent repeat what had gone before; the other chapter is in the third Part, founded on Christ’s appearance after His Resurrection to the Virgin Mary.”

The three omitted chapters are XXVI and XXXIV of Treatise I, Part II, and Chapter VI of Treatise II, Part I.

But besides these entire chapters I have counted fifty-six (evidently intentional) omissions of words, sentences, and paragraphs, running sometimes to a whole page or more; and the statement that “rarely is there a word given but what has been written by the devout author” seems to me inadequate. I have noted forty-five passages (not infrequently running to a whole sentence at a time) in which, apart from omissions, the sense of the original has (clearly of set purpose) been altered; and some of these changes are grotesque, to use no stronger term.

As instances of what is meant, I may cite the following:

(1) At page 216, in order to avoid a reference to the Blessed Virgin Mary, the author’s words: “Conforta me, Deus meus, in omni pressura cordis mei propter meritum sacratissimæ passionis tuæ et vehetnentes dolores et uberrimas lacrimas beatissimæ matris tuæ Mariæ, quas ex compassione et aspectu vulnerum tuorum juxta crucem stando et amarissime flendo effudit”; are translated thus: “Comfort me, my God, in every trouble of my heart, by the merits of Thy most sacred Passion; and by the vehement grief and the plenteous tears, which Thou, out of compassion for me, didst pour forth on the Cross.”

(2) At page 339 (in order to get rid of a reference to the sign of the Cross), Thomas à Kempis is made to say—in a prayer addressed to God the

Holy Ghost—"Against all terrors of the night, and temptations of the devil, grant me the gift of faith in Thy Cross and Passion"!

Five-sixths of Chapter X, Treatise II, Part I, are so trimmed and edited that the text is scarcely recognizable in the "translation."

From all this it seems plain that those who use either Mr. Lee's or Dr. Kettlewell's "translation," hoping to find in it a veritable treatise of Thomas à Kempis, will be disappointed, and that Father "Carre's" is the only English translation (in any true sense of the word) of the "De Vitâ" which has yet appeared.

That work cannot, unfortunately, be republished; for to revise it, without re-writing it, would be practically impossible, and to reprint it as it stands would be to print something which scarcely any one would read. This fact, the appearance last year of Dr. Pohl's text, and the kind suggestion of a friend, have led to the present attempt. It has been a labour of love; and that it may be useful to those into whose hands it may come is the earnest hope of

THE TRANSLATOR.

October, 1903.

The Translator's notes are marked thus [———].

TREATISE I

PART I

DEVOUT MEDITATION ON THE LIFE OF
OUR SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST, AND
UPON THE BENEFITS WROUGHT BY
HIM FOR US, WITH THANKSGIVING
THEREFOR

PREFACE

WOULDST thou be perfectly cleansed from thy faults;

Wouldst thou be richly endowed with virtues;

Wouldst thou have deep insight into Holy Writ;

Wouldst thou triumph gloriously over thy enemies;

Wouldst thou have abundant consolation when things go wrong with thee;

Wouldst thou upon earth walk humbly with thy God;

Wouldst thou sorrow often upon thy bed;

Wouldst thou shed sweet tears in prayer;

Wouldst thou be on fire in thy meditations;

Wouldst thou persevere in good works;

Wouldst thou be filled with spiritual joy;

Wouldst thou be rapt in ecstasy;

Wouldst thou enter into the deep things of God;

Wouldst thou die happily at the last;

Wouldst thou reign for ever in Heaven—exercise thyself in the Life and in the Passion of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, Whom the Father sent into the world, that He might give to all men the example of a perfect life, and might bring to an everlasting Kingdom those who follow Him.

Love Christ therefore: follow Jesus: hold fast to the Crucified.

CHAPTER I

Devout thanksgivings for the whole Life of Jesus Christ, the Mediator between God and man: and firstly a prayer arousing the soul to the praise of God

O LORD my God, I wish to praise Thee; for I know that to praise Thee was the end for which I was created.

Open Thou my lips to praise Thee, that I may worthily magnify Thy name.

Lift up my heart to Thee; keep me from being weary; shed forth upon me Thy grace; kindle in my heart the fire of Thy love; that so I may be able to render to Thee the thanks that are Thy due.

Take Thou away the iniquity of Thy servant; wash me from all uncleanness, whether of the flesh or of the spirit; that so I may be made worthy to open my lips to glorify Thy Name.

But who can worthily extol the depth of Thy infinite Majesty? All the powers of Heaven, all the Angelic hosts, can never praise Thee worthily: how then can frail man attain thereto, who is a thing of corruption, and a worm?

No creature, no thought, no tongue, no language, can ever duly praise Thee.—What then? Shall I cease from praising Thee, because I cannot praise Thee worthily? Shall I be silent, and close my lips, because I know them to be unclean, and myself to be a thing of nought?

Far from me be such ingratitude, as that I should cease to praise Thee, Whom every creature is bound to praise: and above them all man, whom

Thou hast endowed with reason; on whom, beyond all others, Thou hast bestowed so many gifts.

O Father of mercies, and God of infinite goodness, I know in truth, I confess from the bottom of my heart, that in Thy sight I am a sinner of utter vileness, one who with downcast eyes, with groans and tears, should rather plead for mercy, than think of taking upon his polluted lips Thy most sweet name, and dare to praise it.

And yet, trusting in Thy lovingkindness and in Thy unfathomable goodness, I long to praise Thee, beseeching from the depth of my heart the bowels of Thy mercies, that Thou wouldst not despise me, nor hold me back from praising Thy glorious name, impure worm and foul carcase though I be: but wouldst kindle and inflame my inmost soul to praise Thee with devout and joyful lips.

Thine own praise, O my God, Thou Thyself art; nor canst Thou be worthily praised by any other than Thyself; for of all things Thou art the Maker and the Ruler; and from Thee do all things come, whose excellence and whose work declare the Glory of Thy name.

Ever therefore shouldst Thou be praised, shouldst Thou be blessed, by every creature. But when the mind contemplates Thy majesty, and longs to join Thee in praising Thee in Thyself for Thy supreme goodness, words come not.

May then, O my God, Thy own incomprehensible Essence, Thy own unspeakable Almightyness, Thy own unsearchable Wisdom, Thy own unutterable Sweetness, Thy own boundless Tenderness, praise Thee!

Praise Thee Thy supreme Goodness; Thy surpassing Mercy; Thy eternal Power also, and Thy transcendent Majesty!

Praise Thee Thy infallible Truth, Thy unchangeable Equity, Thy inextinguishable Light, Thy Knowledge from which no secrets are hid, Thy Own unapproachable Substance!

Praise Thee Thy unerring Justice, Thy all-wise Providence, Thy most calm Governance, and Thy unconquerable Power!

Praise Thee Thy infinite Dignity, Thy supreme Lovingkindness, Thy all-surpassing Sweetness, Thy peerless Beauty, and Thy all-excelling Charity!

May every name that can be used of Thee, and every word that can be spoken of Thee, praise Thee and magnify Thee for ever!

May the most noble Queen of Heaven, the glorious Virgin Mary, praise Thee; and may she, and the whole Court of Heaven, magnify for ever Thy infinite Majesty!

May the thousand thousands of Thy ministering Angels extol Thee with the worship which is Thy due, and sing praises of endless gratitude to the honour of Thy Name!

May the ten thousand times ten thousand citizens of Heaven, who ever stand before Thee, praise Thee with boundless rejoicing, and adore Thee with the deepest reverence!

May all this most joyous Company of the household of Heaven pay to Thee, on my behalf, devout and acceptable homage; may they praise Thee and magnify Thee for ever!

May all the fervent desires of the Saints, all the sweet utterances of the Doctors of the Church, all the several virtues put forth, and all the most perfect actions wrought, in honour of Thy name, join the universal melody of all created things, in praising and in magnifying Thee to the utmost of their power, blessing the most Holy Name of the Lord their God for ever and ever!

And may all Thy Saints, and all Thy Elect, whose names are written in the Book of Life, laud and magnify Thee with never-ending praise; and may their prayers obtain for me the full remission of my sins, a good death, a happy end, deliverance from the pains of Hell, and an entry into Heavenly glory, there to have the bliss of dwelling with Thee for ever!

CHAPTER II

A Prayer concerning the creation of the first man, and his unhappy fall

I BLESS Thee, and give thanks to Thee, O Holy Trinity, and undivided Unity—Father, Son and Holy Ghost—one true and Almighty God, Who, that Thou mightest proclaim the unspeakable abundance of Thy Goodness, didst in the beginning create the heaven and the earth, and the sea and all the things that are therein; and didst exalt man above Thy other creatures, to Thine own image and likeness, by making him powerful in dominion, wise in understanding, and innocent in life.

I praise and glorify Thee for Thy surpassing munificence in endowing man in paradise with delights of every kind, giving him the things above him to enjoy, and the things beneath him to rule—all to be held upon condition of ever praising Thee.

I praise and magnify Thee, most gracious God, for Thy infinite compassion, and Thy unspeakable mercy, in sparing man, who had gone astray, and been ungrateful for all Thy benefits, from a fall beyond recovery, when depriving him for his sins of the joys of paradise, that so he might be brought to repent of them. He had indeed, by his transgression, deserved to be condemned for ever, without hope of pardon; but Thou, by allowing Thy unspeakable mercy to take the place of the severity of Thy Justice, didst lay upon him the burden of a fitting penance, the smart of which was to be healed after many days by the balm of a long-wished-for pardon. And this was done that the creature, whom Thou hadst endowed with reason, and who had fallen into sin by his own fault, might be saved by Thy grace.

Every faithful soul therefore is bound to render thanks to Thee, and never to trust in its own strength, or boast of its own merits or righteousness. Thy creatures, O my God, are we all: by Thy Goodness we exist: of Thy Bounty have we received all that we have: of our own perversity it is that we fall, and are found wanting in Thy sight; and were it not that by Thy merciful aid we are again raised up and strengthened, we should sink lower and lower, and end by being consumed in our iniquities.

Thy compassion, then, most gracious God, we entreat; the abundance of Thy tender lovingkindness we remember, we joyfully extol, we proclaim as best we may; and for the multitude of Thy compassions, poured forth without stint upon us, Thy polluted children, sold under sin, we offer to Thee, with thanksgiving, our Sacrifice of love and praise.

CHAPTER III

Of the reinstatement of man, and the promise of Christ's coming

O ALMIGHTY and most gracious God, Whose nature is goodness, Whose Will is power, Whose property it is to have mercy, I bless Thee, and render thanks to Thee for Thy infinite love, and for Thy free and undeserved goodness, in that Thou didst lose no time in calling back man, who had been taken captive in the snare of the devil, and brought low by the poison of a mortal disease, from his manifold wanderings from the right way, and from the defilement of his sins, into the way of repentance, and a state of righteousness; by giving to him, through the saving promise of Thy coming, the hope of pardon, and the prospect of a remedy to be brought within his reach.

And lest man should at any time seek to plead ignorance as an excuse for the malice of his sin, Thou didst give him frequent warning of the error of his ways, by revealing to him Thy law, by smiting him with Thy heavy hand, by exercising open judgements upon sinners, by working frequent miracles, and by promising good things to come; that so they might be without excuse who should not turn to Thee as their God, and to a knowledge of the truth.

For all through the five ages of the world, by means of Patriarchs, of Judges, of Priests, of Kings, and of Prophets, from righteous Abel even unto John the Baptist, Thy forerunner, Thou didst never cease, by wonderful miracles and manifold prophecies, to foretell, to promise, and to prefigure Thy coming, without which we are undone: that so, by means of so many witnesses going before Thee, and proclaiming Thy mysteries, Thou mightest implant in our minds the grace of faith, and by the lively examples

of so many ancient Fathers, mightest kindle in our dull cold hearts the fire
of Thy love.

CHAPTER IV

Of the redemption of the human race by the mystery of the Incarnate Word

I BLESS Thee, and give thanks to Thee, my Lord and my God, Creator and Redeemer of the human race, for Thy exceeding great love in willing that man, whom Thou hadst wonderfully created, should be still more wonderfully redeemed. For it was when we were yet thine enemies, and death had long tyrannized over all the human race, that Thou didst call to mind Thy rich mercies, and from the place of Thy habitation in glory, didst look down upon this vale of tears and wretchedness.

It was when Thou hadst seen that the affliction of Thy people was great upon the earth, and that the burden of the sons of Adam was grievous to be borne, that, inwardly moved by the tenderness of Thy charity, Thou didst set Thyself to think in our behalf thoughts of Redemption and of peace.

For, when the fullness of time was come, Thou Thyself, the Dayspring from on high, didst come to visit us, and didst fulfil the desires of the prophets by taking upon Thyself our Flesh, and appearing among men true God and true man.

I bless and praise Thee, Jesus Christ, our Saviour, for Thy exceeding great humility in deigning to choose for Thy Mother a poor young maiden, and for causing her to be espoused to the poor carpenter Joseph, a just and holy man.

I bless Thee for making known Thy most illustrious Incarnation, and for the reverent angelic greeting, with which the Angel Gabriel most devoutly saluted the ever-blessed Virgin Mary, making known to her the Divine Mystery that she should be the Mother of the Son of God.

I praise and magnify Thee for the grandeur of the faith of Mary the Virgin, for the courage of her assent, for the lowliness of her reply, and for all the other virtues which she so conspicuously displayed, when she made her obedient answer to the angel's message in the words: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to Thy word."

I praise and glorify Thee, O Eternal Wisdom of the Father, for the marvellous condescension of Thy unapproachable Majesty in entering the vile prison of our mortal frame, and for Thy most pure Conception, by the operation of the Holy Ghost upon Mary; in whose virgin womb the Power of the most Highest, overshadowing her, formed Thy most sacred Body from the undefiled flesh of a pure virgin. For Thou, being at the same time true God, consubstantial with the Eternal Father, wast made one flesh with us, without spot of sin, to make us one spirit with Thee, through the adoption of the sons of God.

I praise and magnify Thee for voluntarily emptying Thyself of Thy fullness, and for graciously taking upon Thyself our weak and degraded nature, capable of suffering and of death; that so Thou mightest fill us by emptying Thyself, mightest save us by Thy sufferings, mightest raise us by Thy lowliness, mightest strengthen us by Thy weakness, and by Thy death mightest bring us to a glorious immortality.

I praise and magnify Thee, for that Thou, Whose Divine nature knows neither times nor seasons, but Who hast ordered all things here below in their season and time, didst vouchsafe to dwell for nine long months within the narrow limits of a virgin's womb, and to lie hid there as a babe waiting for the due time of his birth.

O the gracious and most wondrous condescension of Him, Who, though God of boundless glory, did not think scorn of becoming a contemptible worm; and Who, though He had created all things by His own mere Will, yet, to free us from them, was ready to take upon Himself our sorrows!

O most sweet Jesus, Thou Brightness of the Eternal Glory, the lower Thou hast made Thyself, by taking upon Thee our nature, the more exalted dost Thou appear to me in Thy Goodness; the viler Thou hast made Thyself for me, the dearer hast Thou become to me.

CHAPTER V

Of the birth and poverty of the Lord Jesus

I BLESS, and give thanks to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, the Only-begotten of the Father, born before all worlds, Who, of Thy unspeakable condescension, didst vouchsafe to be born in a filthy stable, and for love of holy poverty, to be laid in a narrow manger.

I praise Thee, most loving Jesus, for Thy illustrious origin; for Thy glorious birth of the pure Virgin Mary; for Thy poverty; and for Thy humility in lying in so poor and mean a crib. Who can meditate as he should on the thought of the most High God, so demeaning Himself for our sake? O what thanks does not the human race owe to Thee, Who, for its redemption, didst choose to lie in a narrow manger!

O boundless tenderness, O wondrous sweetness, O sweetest love—God born a helpless babe, wrapped in mean swaddling clothes, laid in a narrow manger, with brute beasts surrounding Him!

O humility passing human thought, that the Lord of all lords should deign to become the fellow-servant of His own servants! But, O my Lord, and my God, it seemed to Thee too small a thing, that Thou Who art my Creator shouldst also be my Father; Thou didst even stoop to become my Brother, and to be made flesh of my flesh, taking in very truth my nature upon Thee, sin only excepted.

O Birth, outside the course of nature, triumphing over the natural order of our births, and assuaging by Divine power the tears which we shed at them, in order that, by It, our nature might be restored!

O how blessed and how lovely was Thy Nativity, O sweetest Jesus, Child of the illustrious Virgin, Who, by Thy birth from the womb of Thy highly exalted Mother Mary, dost make good the faults of our birth, renew our condition, cancel our condemnation, blot out the handwriting of the decree

which was against us; that so, if a man is tempted to repine at being born of Adam's stock, he may rejoice in Thy undefiled Nativity, and in the most blessed trust that by Thy grace he has been born again.

I thank Thee, for Thy self-chosen and glorious Nativity, O Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, by Whom we have access to that Grace in which we stand, and trust in the hope restored to us from above of the glory of the sons of God. Thou art the pledge of our redemption: Thou art the everlasting hope of all men; to Thee do we sinners humbly fly for refuge—to Thee, Who didst come to seek us, when as yet we knew Thee not.

O sweet and holy Infancy, from which alone true innocence comes to human hearts; by which, however old a man may be, he may go back to blessed infancy, and may be made like to Thee, not by the shrinking of his limbs, but by the lowliness of his mind, and the holiness of his life!

O most gentle Jesus, Who, that Thou mightest give to all men an example of a holy life, and the means of everlasting salvation, didst will to be born of Mary the Virgin, at the hour of midnight, grant that I may tread in the sacred footsteps of Thy humility and poverty! Grant that I may join, in giving praise and thanks to Thee, the Angels and the whole company of the heavenly host, whom Thou didst cause to be the joyful heralds of Thy Nativity!

CHAPTER VI

Of the hardships and want of Jesus in His low estate

I BLESS Thee, and give thanks to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, for that, as soon as Thou hadst taken upon Thee our flesh, Thou didst, for love of us, endure many hardships, and didst make trial, in all its bitterness, of the stress of utter poverty. For when Thou, very God, wast born into the world, Thou didst choose for the hour of Thy birth the secrecy of the night, and for its ease and comfort the winter cold: Thou didst not seek, as a home for Thy sovereign Majesty, the grandeur of a stately palace, but didst find instead, in a little crib, a shelter for Thy infant helplessness.

O poverty beyond compare, that Thou couldst scarce find swaddling clothes wherein to wrap Thee—Thou Who holdest the world in the hollow of Thy hand, Who unto Adam and to his wife didst make coats of skins, Who in wondrous variety dost adorn the sky with stars, the earth with flowers, and beasts with their coats of hair.

O holy poverty of the Son of God, more precious than all earthly wealth, poverty in which scarce one of us can follow Thee! For which of us has come into the world in straits such as Thine? In what language, in what story, shall we find examples of any of Thy Saints born under conditions so mean and so poor?

To Thee, then, O my Jesus, mighty King, Infant worthy of all love; to Thee do I offer from the bottom of my heart the tribute of all the gratitude of which my heart is capable, beseeching Thee that, of Thy love, Thou wouldest grant me lovingly to cherish the joys of holy poverty, and by the help of Thy grace to bear its hardships patiently. Thou didst leave Thy Throne on high that Thou mightest commend the state of poverty to our

love: to Thy riches, as God, no limits can be set; but as man, for our sakes, Thou madest Thyself poor.

I praise and magnify Thee, for taking upon Thyself our poverty and weakness; and for holding us so dear, that laying aside Thy royal diadem, Thou didst vouchsafe to be numbered among the sons of men, and as if Thou hadst been one of them, to share the frailty of our nature, yet without any spot of sin.

CHAPTER VII

Of the crying of the Infant Jesus

I BLESS Thee, and give thanks to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, Joy of Angels, Comforter of the sad at heart, for Thy infant crying and tears, wherewith Thou didst sorrowfully mourn over the sins of the sons of Adam.

O thing of wonder, O surpassing condescension, that He Who is very God should cry in a cradle as a helpless babe; that He, to Whom in Heaven Angels sing praise, should, as one subject to death, hang upon a Mother's breasts; that He Who sustains and gives food to all flesh, Who makes the clouds to thunder, and the rain to water the earth, should be held by the hand, and be carried about as a helpless child!

How is that which is highest joined with that which is lowest, that which is of man with that which is of God!

It was to wash me from my iniquity that, as an Infant, Thou didst weep; it was over my sins that Thy tears were shed. Therefore, O my Lord and my God, I owe Thee more for the sorrows, by which Thou didst redeem me, than for that mighty working by which Thou didst create me. How ought I not to bewail my sins, since Thou, O Lord, didst weep so constantly over them! How grievous must have been the wounds of my soul, when the tears which Thou didst shed over them were so many!

And yet there is nothing strange or wondrous in the thought that Thou, Who camest down from heaven to shed Thy precious Blood to wash us from our sins, shouldst shed tears of pity for them.

I praise Thee, therefore, my beloved Jesus, and I will never cease to praise Thee, for the love and for the pity Thou hast shown to me, a miserable sinner.

CHAPTER VIII

Of the suckling of the hungry Jesus

I BLESS Thee, and give thanks to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, never-failing Fountain of life, for being suckled at the breasts of Mary the Virgin, by whose sacred milk Thou wast fed—Thou Who givest food to all, Thou Who art the Food and Bread of Angels.

O the unspeakable sweetness of the condescension of God to man! Who can rightly think of the excellence of the mystery and the bounty of the undeserved mercy, that God should be suckled at a Mother's breasts, and be nourished by a Virgin's milk? O my Lord and my God, with what tenderness of love hast Thou made Thyself one with me, by thus subjecting Thyself to the needs of our human weakness! O great and tremendous mystery that Thou, one and the same Person, art thus made known to us as God of the substance of God the Father, and very man of the substance of Thy virgin Mother: that we thus confess Thee to be, at one and the same time, the son of a woman, and the Only-Begotten of the Father's Glory: that Thou art made a partaker of our human nature, and yet, being one and the same person, art worshipped as the Lord of Angels.

I praise Thee, therefore, and bless Thy infinitely tender love, for that Thou didst think no scorn of being nourished at Thy Mother's breasts, if so Thou mightest make it plain that Thou hadst indeed taken upon Thee our flesh, of the substance of Thy Virgin Mother.

O Thou Who givest food to all, and wast Thyself content with so little, feed my soul, I beseech Thee, with the rich banquet of Thy Holy Word, and give me grace to serve Thee, and to give thanks to Thee, so long as I shall dwell in this frail tenement of clay.

CHAPTER IX

Of the painful Circumcision of the Lord Jesus

O LORD JESUS CHRIST, Saviour of the world, Fountain of purity, Pattern of spotless innocence, I bless Thee, and give thanks to Thee for the painful circumcision of Thy most tender Flesh, according to the law of Moses; to which, in order that in all things Thou mightest conform to it, Thou didst submit Thyself, albeit Thou wast Thyself without any spot of sin.

I praise Thee for the first spilling of Thy innocent Blood, which on this day Thou didst shed for us. O most meek Lamb of God, how brightly were the excellence of Thy love and the depth of Thy patience shown forth, when, at so tender an age, Thou didst submit Thy holy and innocent Flesh to the pain of circumcision, a pain which It had not deserved.

It is I who have sinned; it is Thou Who payest the penalty of my sin. I indeed was conceived and born in sin: Thou wast conceived without sin, and yet dost Thou meekly submit to be branded with a sinner's mark. What was there in Thee faulty, or useless, that needed to be cut away? And yet, because I could myself never make to Thee full satisfaction for my sins, Thou didst come to my help by Thy grace; and didst apply, by the cruel circumcision of Thy Flesh, a cleansing remedy to my soul. But what wonder is it that Thou, Who wast ready to give Thy life, shouldst submit to be circumcised, for us? Having given Thyself wholly for me, Thou art willing to be wholly spent for me.

O most good and gracious Lord Jesus, Thou Who didst meekly undergo the circumcision of Thy innocent Flesh, circumcise, I pray Thee, all my members with the cutting-stone of Thy Grace; order all my actions, and direct all my ways, in conformity with Thy most holy life. All that Thou

findest in me unspiritual cut away, I beseech Thee, and destroy: root out all that Thou seest in me to be useless: keep down with all the needful force of Thy discipline whatever in me is false and frivolous; so that, inwardly cleansed from my faults, and adorned with the virtues that I lack, I may have a perpetual love of Thy Holy Name, and be found meet to dwell with Thee in Thy Heavenly Kingdom.

CHAPTER X

Of the bestowal of the Saving Name of Jesus

I BLESS Thee, and give thanks to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, for the giving to Thee of Thy Saving and Adorable Name, Jesus.

This Name was first made known by the Angel to Blessed Mary the Virgin; later it was revealed to holy Joseph in a dream; but now, on this day, it was given Thee by Thy parents.

O sweetest Name of Jesus, Name blessed above every name, whether in Heaven or on earth! According to Thy Name, O my Jesus, so be Thy praise to the ends of the world. From the rising of the sun to the going down thereof, may Thy glorious Name be worthily magnified from this time forth for evermore! From everlasting was this most Holy and Adorable Name made Thine by God the Father; but only when the fullness of time was come, was it made known unto men. For there is no other Name given to men, whereby we must be saved.

Just, therefore, and right is it, that to Thee should bow every knee in Heaven and on earth; and that every tongue should confess that Thou art Jesus Christ, our Saviour and our Redeemer. O most sweet Jesus, how excellent is Thy Name in all the earth! Great indeed is Thy Name above the name of Solomon, and above those of all the kings which were before or after him. Therefore shall all the kings of the earth fall down and worship Thee; and Thee shall all peoples and languages serve and obey; for Thou art the Lord our God, the King, and the Saviour of all Christians.

O sweet and saving Name of Jesus, which heals all our infirmities, enlightens our minds, sets on fire our hearts, drives away our grief, softens anger, sheds forth peace and concord, fosters charity, and turns our sorrow into joy!

This dearest of all names was brought down to earth by an Angel from Heaven. This name was preached throughout the world by the Apostles. For this name it was that the Martyrs suffered. This name it was that Confessors proclaimed aloud. This name it was that Holy Virgins ardently loved. This name it is which is praised and hymned by old and young. The most sweet Name of Jesus it is which, rather than deny, thousands upon thousands of the faithful have preferred to suffer death.

This saving Name it is which princes and kings now worship and adore. This name it is which Priests and Doctors publish and proclaim. This name it is which all faithful Christians especially venerate and love; for, renouncing the devil and the world, it is in the name of Jesus that they hope to be saved. For Jesus is the Saviour, and the Protector, of all who are His, and who believe in, and who love, Him to the end.

O most sweet Jesus, my one hope of salvation, write, I beseech Thee, Thy Name upon my heart, not in the letter but in the spirit; and grant that by Thy Grace it may be so strongly there impressed, and may there remain, that neither prosperity nor adversity may ever dim my love for Thee. Be Thou to me a strong tower from the face of the enemy, my comforter in tribulation, my counsellor when I am in doubt, my refuge in distress, my lifter-up when I fall, the model of my life, my restorer when I go astray, and my ever-faithful guide through all the dangers and temptations of this mortal life to my home which is above.

CHAPTER XI

Of the Epiphany of Jesus, and the devout oblation of the Holy Kings

I BLESS Thee, and give thanks to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, Prince of the kings of the earth, for Thy glorious Manifestation of Thyself to the three Kings. For after that Thou hadst been born in Bethlehem of Judaea, Thou wast not slow in revealing Thy Majesty to men who came from afar; and having led them by a heavenly light to Thy humble resting-place, Thou didst manifest to them Thy holy poverty.

O my God, mighty and wonderful, Who alone orderest all things here below, and workest mightily in heaven above, Thou thoughtest it no scorn to be seen in Thy poverty and neglect by so many kings and nobles, if only Thou mightest be to us a pattern of humility. Having for our sakes chosen Thy resting-place, and Thy apparel, Thou didst make no change in them, but didst show Thyself in them, alike to shepherds and to kings.

I praise Thy gracious mercy for these first-fruits of the Gentile world, and for Thy call to these strangers, whom, by a secret inspiration of Thy grace, Thou didst draw from Eastern lands to behold the light of faith. Among the princes of Israel were found none who made ready, with such reverence and trust, to seek the place of Thy Nativity: far more lively was the faith, far more fervent the devotion, of those strangers to the Covenant.

I glorify Thy Holy Name for Thy wondrous enlightenment of Gentiles; for so gloriously didst Thou send forth Thy light into the hearts of those men of the East, who as yet were sitting in darkness, that without thinking of the length of their journey, they followed with a trust which knew no doubt, the leading of Thy sign from heaven.

I reverently join the Holy Magi in adoring Thee; and following them step by step, I would devoutly offer to Thee their three precious gifts, each containing a deep mystery. For, falling at Thy feet, they offered to Thee gold in token of Thy kingly dignity, frankincense as doing homage to Thy Divine Majesty, myrrh as confessing Thy submission to the law of death.

Wherefore, O my Lord Jesus Christ, most gracious King of Kings, Ruler of Heaven and of earth, accept, I beseech Thee, at the hand of Thy servant, the mystic offering, which I now humbly present to Thee, through the intercession of the Holy Kings.

I offer to Thee in the first place right faith, firm hope, and pure charity, in which I trust that I may continue to the end. I believe that Thou art the King of Heaven and of Earth: I adore Thee as very God, the Only-Begotten of the Father: I confess that, for my salvation, Thou didst take of the Virgin Mary a mortal Body.

Accept further, I beseech Thee, also these other gifts, each having in itself a sweet-smelling savour. Lo, I give to Thee that which also I received from Thee, namely all my worldly goods, which I renounce for love of Thee. I would not in this life have anything of my own. I wish to be content with common food and simple raiment. This is in a moral sense my oblation of pure gold.

I would add also the gift of frankincense, by which I mean the incense of devout prayer; beseeching Thee, with sighs and tears, for the forgiveness of my sins; praising and thanking Thee for the good gifts Thou hast bestowed upon me; and grieving for all who are in trouble or distress. This, surely, is the burning of fragrant incense, acceptable to Thee.

I offer to Thee also, in figure, myrrh, in memory of Thy most bitter Passion, praying that I too may have grace to run in the way of perfection by the austerity of my self-mortification. For, as often as, for love of Thee, I call to mind the bitterness of Thy Passion, I offer to Thee, in figure, the choicest myrrh: and whenever I overcome in myself evil desires, and renounce my own will, I bruise, as best I may, in the mortar of my heart, fragrant myrrh, that so from thence may come forth a sacrifice acceptable to Thee. Oh, how happy should I be, if I could offer to my Jesus a bundle of myrrh, by gathering together into one all the labour, all the sorrow, and all the bitterness of Thy Passion! For it is by such a mingling of myrrh and

frankincense that the faithful soul is moved to earnest efforts after amendment, to acts of penance, and to the mortification of corrupt desires.

I give thanks to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, for the high sanctity of this day, which Thou didst adorn with three mighty wonders. For on this day Thou didst lead three kings to the Manger in Bethlehem; on this day Thou wast baptized of John in the river Jordan; on this day Thou didst turn water into wine at the marriage at Cana in Galilee—by all which things Thou didst plainly manifest Thyself to be both God and man.

I pray Thee, therefore, O my meek and gracious Lord, that Thou wouldst never suffer me to be led astray by Herodian wiles, that is to say by worldly honours, and the allurements of the flesh; but that, through the merits of the Holy Kings, and the prayers of Thy most chaste Mother, and under the protection of Thy angelic host, Thou wouldest lead me, together with the Blessed Kings, along the way that leadeth to the Heavenly Country, there to behold Thee in Thy everlasting glory.

CHAPTER XII

Of the Purification of Blessed Mary, and the Presentation of Jesus

I BLESS Thee, and give thanks to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, Fountain of purity, for Thy lowly Presentation in the Temple of God, where, with victims and with gifts, Thou wast offered by Thy parents as one of the sons of Adam, and wast redeemed with five shekels of silver, as if Thou hadst been some chattel of a slave, sold and bought back again.

I bless Thee, for Thy lowly obedience to the Law of God, O most Holy Redeemer of the world, Who—Thyself free from any debt of sin—didst make Thyself subject to all the ordinances of the Law, that Thou mightest be to us an example of perfect obedience.

I glorify Thee for the exceeding humility of Thy most blessed Mother, and for her obedience, of her own free choice, to the Law of Moses: for, although she was both before and after child-birth, a Virgin undefiled, yet did she not think scorn of submitting to the rite of Purification.

O most pleasing oblation! O most sweet satisfaction! For it was free: it was full: and it was faultless.

But what shall I offer, what shall I render unto Thee, my Lord and my God, for all Thy benefits to me? O how needful for me is purification, for the washing away of my sins; how expedient for me is satisfaction for my acts of transgression—for me who am polluted with the stains of so many sins.

To Thee, therefore, O most gracious Lord Jesus Christ, to Thee do I look up, beseeching Thee, that Thou wouldst vouchsafe to make satisfaction for me, and to wash away my sins by Thy most pure oblation of Thyself: that

so, cleansed and purified by Thy grace, I may win an entrance into the Temple of Thy heavenly Abode, there to praise Thy Holy Name for ever.

And do Thou also, Holy Mother of God, glorious Virgin Mary, pray for me that my sins may be forgiven: that there may be granted to me time for repentance, and a firm purpose of amendment, by the help of God's grace: and that there may be nothing wanting in me to win back my place in God's favour. Do thou plead for me, O most gracious Mother, by offering thyself, together with thy most dearly beloved Son, before our Father in heaven. May thy virginal purity atone for my impurities, whether of body or of soul; may thy love inflame the coldness of my heart; may thy humility subdue my pride; may thy voluntary obedience break down the hardness of my perverse will.

I place myself in thy hands, and in those of thy dearly-beloved Son: and whatever I can do, that I shall always be ready to do, in His service, and in thine.

I offer a pair of turtle doves, to wit, a twofold compunction of heart, first by way of grieving for my sins and shortcomings, and next by way of sighing for the joys that have no end.

I also present willingly, as a whole burnt offering to the Lord, two young pigeons: earnestly desiring, that is, to keep a twofold simplicity of heart, first by way of rendering to no man evil for evil, and next by way of overcoming evil with good.

For all which do Thou vouchsafe to grant me Thy grace, O kind Jesus, Who wast on this day presented in the Temple by Thy lowly virgin Mother, and wast taken up with joy into the loving arms of the just and devout Simeon.

CHAPTER XIII

Of the persecution of Jesus, and His flight into Egypt

I BLESS Thee, and give thanks to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, most mighty King of Kings, for Thy persecution, and for the hardships forced upon Thee, in the days of Thy childhood, when Thou didst flee from the face of the most wicked King Herod, and wast driven forth as a stranger and an outcast from Thine own land, and hadst to enter in secret that land of Egypt, from which, in the days of old, Thou hadst with a mighty hand led forth the children of Israel.

I praise and magnify Thee for the toilsome journey and long exile, which Thou didst undergo, dwelling in a foreign land for the space of seven years, amidst a barbarous people, and men altogether strange to Thee.

How cruel was the wickedness which could seek to slay the Author of life, and could drive out, from the land into which He had been born, the King of heaven! What tears would not one have shed, could one have seen the graceful virgin Mother, with her Child, so fair and so beloved, hurrying away, sheltered by the darkness of the night, to take refuge in a land of which they knew nothing! Truly this instance of persecution is to us a bright example of patience, and is a lesson to all Christ's people not to wonder at having to suffer many things at the hands of men who know Him not.

I praise and magnify Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, for Thy blessed return from Egypt; for journeying back again into Thine own land; for dwelling with Thy parents in the City of Nazareth, as their son; for the innocent life led by Thee in that city among their friends and neighbours; and for submitting to share the poverty of Thy Mother, and of her Spouse, the holy Joseph.

Grant to me now, I beseech Thee, O my beloved Jesus, to tread, at least in my small degree, in Thy steps, in this matter of patience; give me grace not to murmur when I have to suffer wrong; but rather humbly to give way to an angry man, to submit cheerfully to being laughed at, and evil spoken of; and when any one vexes and annoys me, give me grace to curb my anger against him, to pray earnestly for his salvation, and so far as may be, to set down his fault to the account of the old serpent who led him into it.

Give me grace to live peaceably with my brethren, willingly to give way to them, and with them patiently to bear, for Thy honour and glory, the lack of this world's goods, no matter how great it may be.

CHAPTER XIV

Of the Holy Innocents, put to death by Herod for the Name of Jesus

I BLESS Thee, and give thanks to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, Hope of those who die young, glory of the lowly, and crown of all the saints, for the deaths of so many innocent children put to death on account of Thy Holy Name.

I praise and magnify Thee for these first fruits of the Holy Martyrs, who suffered without having ever sinned, whom Thou didst deliver out of this world pure in body and in soul; thus bestowing the crown of martyrdom upon those who had not yet come to the use of reason.

I adore the equity of Thy judgements, manifested in all Thy works: Thou didst exalt the pure and humble to Thy everlasting glory; but didst cast down into Hell, there to be confounded for ever, Herod and the partners in his guilt.

I earnestly implore Thee, O most pure Jesus, to give me, of Thy mercy, grace to follow, in heart and life, the innocence, and the humility of those little ones; so that, laying aside all rancour and arrogance, I may henceforth show myself among my brethren, more gentle, more pure, more lowly, more patient, and more cheerful. May no weakness of the flesh defile me; but by a thorough mortification of my faults may I be kept pure and without offence.

CHAPTER XV

Of the finding of Jesus in the Temple

I BLESS Thee, and give thanks to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, Pattern of humility and mighty Teacher of eternal truth, for the example of Thy stupendous humility, and for the light of Thy hidden wisdom, shown forth to men, at Thy going up to Jerusalem with Thy parents for the Feast; what time Thou didst offer for us to God the Father sacrifices of holy prayer and praise, and didst sit humbly, as a boy of twelve, in the midst of the Doctors, hearing them and discreetly asking them questions, fixing upon Thyself the attention of all who beheld Thee.

I praise Thee, and I magnify with the deepest devotion Thy Holy Name, for the reverent obedience which Thou didst show to Thy parents who long time sought Thee, and at length found Thee; in that Thou, the King of Heaven, renouncing straightway Thine own Will, didst humbly submit Thyself to their authority; and, although they did not understand the saying which Thou spakest unto them, yet didst go down with them from Jerusalem to Nazareth, and didst there show Thyself the most obedient of sons to the best of Mothers.

O most sweet Jesus, most loving of sons, mirror of holiness and of every virtue, teach me, I pray Thee, to subdue the perverseness of my will; cheerfully to bow to the advice of my elders; devoutly to visit the Temple of God; diligently to hear and declare Thy Word; to venerate the Doctors of the Church; to obey my superiors cheerfully; and to serve Thee joyfully all the days of my life, submitting myself in all things to Thy Holy Will.

CHAPTER XVI

Of the holy and bidden life of the lowly Jesus

I BLESS Thee, and give thanks to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, for the surpassing holiness of that hidden life, which Thou didst for so long time lead in the house of Thy parents at Nazareth, where Thou didst dwell with them in great poverty, lowliness, and subjection, from the twelfth to the thirtieth year of Thy age.

I most heartily praise and magnify Thee for Thy condescension in veiling Thy Majesty from those among whom Thou didst dwell, in that Thou didst deign to be called, and to be believed to be, the son of a carpenter; and openly didst nothing from which Thy Godhead might be known.

O the humility of Christ! O my God, how dost Thou confound by it my foolish self-conceit; how, by Thy bright example, dost Thou bid me avoid all outward show, turn aside from men of the world, choose to lead a secluded life, seek to be known to God alone, make the salvation of my soul my chief aim, not put myself forward, even for the sake of edification; but rather strive to lay diligently to heart the Word of Life, until such time as the heavenly call shall come to bring forth fruit!

Help me, sweet Jesus, Thou gracious Master, to understand, by diligent meditation upon it, the character of Thy hidden life; to dedicate my own inner self to Thee; ever to love a humble and secluded life, taking no heed of the things of this world; but cherishing rather, as the objects of my love, the things which concern Thee and my home in Heaven; and, in the secret closet of my heart, to treasure up the story of Thy most holy life and conversation.

CHAPTER XVII

Of the Baptism of Jesus, and our sanctification in its waters

I BLESS Thee, and give thanks to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, Fountain of goodness, and source of every virtue, for humbly receiving holy Baptism; for fulfilling all righteousness; for voluntarily putting Thyself into the hands of Thy forerunner, by whom Thou didst deign to be baptized in the river Jordan; thus consecrating for us the waters of Baptism, and by Thy example showing to all those who come to that Holy Rite, be they of high or be they of low estate, how needful it is for them humbly to receive the Sacrament of new birth unto Salvation, if they would find a place at last in the mansions of Thy heavenly Kingdom.

In Thy Baptism we too have been washed; that sanctification was for our profit, not for Thine; for Thou wast without any spot of sin.

I praise and magnify Thee, O Divine and Adorable Head, before Which even the angelic spirits veil their faces, for most humbly bowing Thyself, for going down into the Jordan, and for receiving its waters upon Thyself, for the washing away of our sins.

I bless Thee, and glorify Thy Holy Name, for Thy revelation of heavenly mysteries; for the presence of the most Holy Trinity manifestly shown forth; for the way of entrance into everlasting life opened out to us; for Thy wondrous enlightenment of John the Baptist, Thy blessed Forerunner; for his humble answer to those who questioned him; and for his ready obedience to Thy word.

O my Jesus, most highly exalted King, how greatly didst Thou abase Thyself this day for me, the vilest of sinners; what stores of Divine grace hast Thou opened to me by this Thy condescension! Look Thou upon me,

and mercifully forgive all the sins, of which, openly and secretly, I have in so many ways been guilty.

I pray to be baptized by Thee with the Holy Ghost and with fire; for I have in many things offended Thy goodness. Wash me thoroughly from my wickedness, and cleanse me from my sin. No one is free from the stain of sin, not even the infant of a day; in all the world no one is pure but Thou alone, the Purifier; Thou alone, the Sanctifier, art Holy, Who, according to the multitude of Thy mercies, hast power to forgive men their sins.

Be gracious unto me, I beseech Thee, O Lord, and let my soul live; nor do Thou remember my former sins, but renew my youth like the eagle's. Forgive what is past; cause me to take heed to my ways in the days that are to come: grant me ever fresh supplies of grace, that so at last I may be found meet to dwell with Thee in the Kingdom of Thy everlasting glory.

CHAPTER XVIII

Of the fasting, and the temptations, of the all-unconquered Jesus

I BLESS Thee, and give thanks to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, for the holy fast, which, in the loneliness of the desert, Thou didst keep for forty days and forty nights, that Thou mightest be to us a model of holy abstinence. There, as a hermit, far from the abodes of men, Thou didst dwell with the wild beasts, and yet hadst Thou Angels for Thy companions; thus setting to all Religious a great example of detachment.

I praise and magnify Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, Food of Angels, and Refreshment of men, for the many pangs of hunger, for the wondrous abstinence, for the stern chastisement of Thy most sacred Body, for the many long watchings, for the holy prayers, and for the most pure meditations, which Thou didst accomplish there in the wilderness.

I praise and magnify Thee for ever for Thy mighty conflict with the devil; for the many attacks of that most wicked tempter; for Thy scorning of all his evil suggestions; for the wise answers from Holy Writ, with which Thou didst confound him; and for Thy most glorious victory over the three cardinal sins—all which Thou didst mercifully bring to pass for the perpetual confounding of Satan, and for the strengthening of our weakness.

On meekly bended knees, I join the holy Angels, who, with the reverence which is Thy due, then ministered to Thee, in praising and adoring Thee: and I beseech Thee that, so long as I live in the wilderness of this present world, Thou wouldest give me daily bread, the help of Thy grace, comfort in tribulation, firmness under temptation, and protection against all the snares of the enemy.

I believe and confess that Thou art Christ, the Son of God, very God, and Lord of Angels, Creator and Redeemer of the human race, in all points proved and tempted in the weakness of our flesh; that so Thou mightest be led to pity us; and having suffered, being tempted like as we are, mightest be able to cure us from the diseases of our sins.

O kind Jesus, Thou most dauntless champion, Who for my sake didst fast so unflinchingly, and didst so bravely fight and conquer, help me, I beseech Thee, to fight manfully against the world, the flesh and the devil, and to repel with steadfast heart every assault of the evil one! For my support and comfort in my exile, send to me, I beseech Thee, Thy holy Angels, ministers of light and peace; may they often visit me, defend me faithfully, succour me powerfully, graciously comfort me, richly bless me; and, when this short life is ended, may they bring me safe and sound, in joy and bliss, to Thee, my only Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ! Amen.

CHAPTER XIX

Of the holy preaching, and the saving Doctrine of Jesus

I BLESS Thee, and give thanks to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, Thou good Shepherd and most faithful Keeper of Thy sheep, for Thy tender care for the salvation of souls, and for Thy ardent longing to bring to men glad tidings of good things; in that, on leaving the wilderness, Thou wentest forth to proclaim the Kingdom of Heaven, and didst sound the trumpet of salvation throughout Judaea, urging all men to repent, to despise the things of this world, and to make haste to lay up for themselves treasures in heaven. O most sweet Jesus, with what earnest care didst Thou go about the villages and the streets, the cities and the towns, busy in the conversion of sinners, in healing the contrite of heart, and in forgiving the sins of the truly penitent.

From the bottom of my heart I praise and glorify Thee for Thy most sweet Doctrine; for Thy fervent preaching of the Gospel throughout all Galilee and Judaea; and for Thy fame so gloriously spread abroad among the people which sat in darkness.

Blessed be those sacred lips and that most gracious tongue, with which Thou didst so often proclaim the sweetness of heavenly life, and speak maxims of eternal truth; and with a voice that all might understand, didst declare Thyself to be, that which indeed Thou art, the true and marvellous Light that had come into the world!

O most loving Jesus, of all Masters the best, grant to me, I beseech Thee, that I may with a thirsting heart drink in the streams of Thy saving Doctrine; that I may diligently give my mind to, wisely discern, and lovingly delight in, the words which then fell from Thy sacred lips. Grant, I

beseech Thee, that I may fashion all my ways conformably thereto; for no otherwise can I find the way of perfection so brightly and so clearly made plain to me, as in the shining mirror of Thy most holy Gospel set up before me, and before all men, to be read by us. In thee, O Lord, Who art the Fountain of eternal wisdom, are to be found in never-ceasing abundance the light of life, and the fullness of joy. Incline, therefore, I beseech Thee, my heart unto Thy testimonies: open Thou mine ear to the words of Thy mouth: turn away mine eyes that they may not behold vanity, and quicken Thou me in Thy way. For although the meaning of the Gospel may appear simple and easy to be understood, yet is it so deep and lofty, and so full of heavenly mysteries, that the whole world would not be large enough to contain them.

CHAPTER XX

Of the glorious miracles, and the kindness and goodness of Jesus

I BLESS Thee, and give thanks to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, Power of God, and Wisdom of the Father, for the glorious signs and mighty wonders, by which Thou didst shed forth upon the world Thy glorious Light, and didst make known Thy Truth even to those sitting in darkness; openly showing Thyself, by infallible proofs and incontestable miracles, to be the Christ, the Son of the Living God, Who had come into the world to be the Saviour of mankind.

I praise and glorify Thee for Thy boundless love, in that Thou didst show Thyself to all men so kind and so good, that not only the poor and the sick, but even the vilest sinners, were not afraid to come to Thee; and were allowed freely to speak to Thee, and to touch Thee.

Blessed be those Eyes, shining more brightly than the sun, Which Thou didst turn, full of pity, upon the crowds who came to Thee, to whom Thou wast so gracious and so compassionate that Thou wouldst in no wise send them away fasting to their homes; but rather didst, not once only but twice, by working a great miracle, more than satisfy many thousands with a few loaves, and some small fishes.

Blessed be those adorable Hands, Which Thou didst freely lay upon so many sick folk; healing at once, by the touch of Thy most sacred Body, all their diseases and infirmities.

Blessed be those all-beautiful Feet, so often wearied, and besmeared with dust, for the Salvation of souls, Which Thou didst use when going to and fro upon the earth, sowing plenteously the Word of Life, proclaiming it to all men, now upon the mountain side, now upon the open plain—working

moreover in proof of Thy holy doctrine, frequent miracles, causing men sick of the palsy to go upon their feet, giving sight to the blind, cleansing lepers, casting out devils, and, by the power of God, bringing back the dead to life.

O adorable Jesus, Light of the World, Salvation of Thy people Israel, our Life, our Might, and our Glory, turn Thine Eye of mercy, I beseech Thee, upon my infirmity, and drive out from my heart every evil lust: give sight to the eyes of my soul, that I may see the heavenly light: open the ears of my understanding that I may hear, O my God, what Thou hast to say to me: raise me from my bed of sloth, that I may go on from strength to strength: direct my feet in the path of Thy commandments, and give power to my withered hands for earnest work in Thy service: cleanse me from the leprosy of the flesh; cure me of the madness of anger; subdue in me the swelling of pride; pluck out from my heart the sting of envy; keep me from excess in eating; drive far from me the plague of covetousness, and crush within me all my impure desires. These most grievous afflictions of an ailing soul, these secret impulses of the devil and his angels, can be healed by Thee alone, O Lord; can be cast out no otherwise than by Thy resistless Word. None can heal these spiritual wounds, none can work wonders of holiness in the inner life, but Thou alone, O Almighty God, Who speakest and it is done, Who commandest and straightway Thy order takes effect. Say therefore, I beseech Thee, to my soul: “Be thou clean,” and forthwith it shall be cleansed: say to the unclean spirit which so often tempts me: “Go out of the man, and enter no more into him”: say to my soul, whenever trouble comes upon me, “Fear not, I am Thy salvation”: speak but one word only, and my soul shall be healed.

CHAPTER XXI

Of the Example, and the Holy Life, of Jesus, and His tribulations in the world

O LORD JESUS CHRIST, Pattern of holiness, Model of all perfection, Flower of virtue, Saviour of life, Mirror of patience, I bless Thee and give thanks to Thee, for all Thy virtues, for Thy beauteous Life, for Thy surpassing gentleness, and for the faultless example which Thou didst openly set to Thy disciples, and to all the people of Israel; thus sweetly drawing to the love of Thee the souls of the lowly in heart, moving to repentance, by the gentle tenderness of Thy words, the hard hearts of sinners, and matchlessly instructing the learned, by Thy every act, and by every word of Thy teaching.

I praise and glorify Thee for all the bodily wants and hardships suffered by Thee whilst in the world. Having taken upon Thyself our mortal nature, Thou didst from the hour of Thy Birth to the hour of Thy Death upon the Cross, vouchsafe to undergo for us, worms of earth and appointed to death, hunger often and thirst, cold and heat, toil and weariness, sadness and anxiety; and Thou didst endure all this with perfect mildness and resignation of heart.

I praise and glorify Thee for the malicious snares so often set for Thee; for the many and grievous persecutions and shameful blasphemies so often inflicted upon Thee by the Scribes and Pharisees; and for the monstrous ingratitude, and the odious slanders, with which Thy chosen people repaid Thee for the innumerable benefits and the mighty wonders, which Thou didst so gloriously work among them.

I praise and magnify Thee for the unspeakable travail of Thy Soul for the conversion and salvation of mankind; for the many long watches of the

night which Thou didst pass in prayer for us; for the groans and for the tears, which Thou didst pour forth in Thy pity for us; for Thy joy and satisfaction over those who were converted to the Faith; for Thy sublime thanksgivings, and the upliftings of Thy Soul; and for the works—so many and so marvellous—wrought by Thee, to the praise and glory of Thy Heavenly Father.

O most adorable Jesus, brightest Mirror of a holy life, grant, I beseech Thee, to me, Thy unworthy servant, whose life has hitherto been most grievously at variance with Thy Holy Will, so to meditate upon Thy most sweet and perfect example, that I may be led to fashion all my actions and behaviour in accordance with it; that I may learn from it to be meek and lowly in heart; to be moderate in my taking of food; simple in my dress; modest in my bearing; not hurried in my gait; calm in my mind; not an idle talker; prudent in my actions; guarded both as to my outward and my inward life; watchful in prayer; devout in meditation; patient under correction; prompt in obedience; easy to be led in every good way; not slow, not careless, not sullen, not restless, not inconstant, not noisy; but kind, cheerful, affable, and unassuming.

CHAPTER XXII

Of the Feast of Palms, and the lowly entry of Jesus into Jerusalem

I BLESS Thee, and give thanks to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, loving Saviour of the world, and merciful Preserver of mankind, for the splendour of Thy marvellous humility, and for the greatness of that unspeakable love, which Thou didst vouchsafe on this day to show forth, when with bare feet Thou didst ride upon an ass, and amid the Hosannas of a vast multitude of children, didst enter the Holy City of Jerusalem.

I praise and glorify Thee, O my Jesus, illustrious Son of David, for the solemn reverence offered to Thee this day by the people of Israel, by whom Thou wast owned and acclaimed with shouts, as King and mighty Prophet.

I praise and honour Thee for Thy marvellous love, and Thy surpassing clemency, in that, of Thy own free will, Thou didst meekly place Thyself in the hands of those murderers, knowing that Thou wouldst shortly afterwards be put to death by them; and didst shed many tears for their sins and wickedness, when warning them how great were the woes which were so soon to follow their present rejoicings.

I praise and glorify Thee for Thy burning zeal against transgressors of the Law, in that Thou didst straightway go into the Temple, and didst drive out from Thy Father's House those who sold and bought therein, and so were making the House of Prayer a den of thieves.

And as Thou didst show Thyself stern against the covetous and unrighteous, against men who were selling their own souls; so on the other hand didst Thou show Thyself tender and full of pity for the sick and poor, by graciously bestowing upon many of them Thy gifts of healing and of holy Doctrine.

O the unspeakable Power of Christ! O the surpassing Love of the Son of God! Who can declare Thy mighty acts, O Lord, or set forth all Thy praise? Remember me, O my Jesus, in the favour of Thy people, and visit me with Thy salvation! Come, my beloved Jesus, and lead me into the holy city of Jerusalem; not that Jerusalem which killed the prophets, but that Jerusalem which is above, whose inhabitants dwell together in unity. Ride, I pray Thee, upon that foal of an ass, the light and wanton lusts of my flesh, by subduing them with the bridle of continence.

Good indeed it is for me to bear my Lord upon my back, and to be subject to His law; never to kick against the rule of obedience, but with patience and with gentleness to endure whatever burden may be laid upon me. For never must I cease from toil, or from spiritual progress; this way, and no other must I go; in this holy course must I proceed; if at length, by Thy merciful help and guidance, I am to reach the Heavenly Jerusalem, where there is peace for evermore.

Therefore, with the Hebrew children, I devoutly acclaim Thee, saying “Hosanna to the Son of David, Hosanna in the highest!” Hail King of all the world, Saviour of the House of Israel, Whose coming the Prophets had foretold since the beginning of the world, Whom the people of the Jews on this day joyfully greeted with their songs of praise.

I adore Thee, I glorify Thee, Who camest, in the Name of Thy Father, to redeem us from the hand of the enemy, and to reconcile us to God the Father by Thy own most precious Blood.

I pray Thee also, O Lord Jesus, to enter the temple of my heart, and to purge and to cast out thence, far from me, whatever Thou shalt find therein that is filthy and profane. Cast out, I pray Thee, from that which should be Thy tabernacle, all the many kinds of worldly cares, all the idols, whether of things, or of persons; overturn the tables of the money-changers, lest covetous lusts should lead me astray. Take away the noise of cattle and of doves, lest an abundance of things earthly should check my longing for things heavenly. Lay hold of the scourge, made of the small cords of the fear of Thee, and with ceaseless vigour drive out, I pray Thee, all the fancies and foul imaginations which the devil, that most shameless of pedlars, is so often wont to spread out before me in Church, at the time of prayer; lest my soul, being sorely tempted, and led astray by the wiles of that deceiver, should be drawn into consent, and should be thereby choked.

Make haste to help me, O most mighty Lord Jesus; suffer me not to be taken in the snares of the devil, or to be overcome of my own wickedness. Keep me from that which is evil, strengthen me in that which is good; that so I may escape the peril of eternal damnation, and may pass with Thee into the everlasting tabernacles of the Heavenly Jerusalem.

CHAPTER XXIII

Of the Lord's Supper, in which, after partaking of the Paschal Lamb, Christ Jesus instituted the Sacrament of His Own Body and Blood

I BLESS Thee, and give thanks to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, Bread of Life, and Fountain of the Water of Salvation, for the most Holy Feast of Thy Last Supper with Thy disciples, which with great desire Thou hadst long time desired to celebrate. At that Feast, Thou, O Lord, King of Heaven and of Earth, didst sup at the same table, and from the same dish, as Thy poor and humble disciples, and in the presence of the traitor Judas; and, during that supper Thou didst pour forth sweet words of holy exhortation, and didst strive by gentle warning, to turn back from his wicked purpose Judas himself.

I praise and glorify Thee for the measureless abundance of Thy wondrous love, in that, after eating of the Paschal lamb, that so Thou mightest fulfil the old Law, Thou didst for the first time celebrate the Sacrament of Thy own most precious Body and Blood, as a memorial of Thy Passion, and of Thy everlasting love for us. At that first Eucharist, Thou didst Thyself, with yearnings of intense devotion, deliver with Thy own ever-blessed Hands, the self-same Sacraments which we now receive to Thy disciples, to be eaten by them; and didst also at the same time make known the form of Its Consecration to be used by them, and by the Priests to be afterwards ordained by them; giving to them, and to their successors, full power to celebrate Mass, so long as the world shall last.

O matchless and wondrous outpouring of love! O the supreme generosity of the bounty of God,—the Giver coming into the Gift; the Gift being wholly the same with the Giver! O worthy and ever to be observed memorial, in which the faithful soul calls to mind that its own death has been put to death, and that in its Beloved, Whom it has received, it has found Life everlasting! O wonder of all wonders the most stupendous, O joy of all joys the greatest, to have God verily present with us, though hidden beneath the wondrous Sacrament; God, Whom the Holy Angels in Heaven adore, as infinitely above themselves, showing Himself to us under a form which all may look upon.

O my sweet Jesus, grant to me, I pray Thee, for the worthy reception of this most Holy Sacrament, a heart contrite for my sins; a conscience made pure in confession; a mind lifted up in prayer; firm faith, strong hope, and fervent charity; devotion constraining to tears; reverence tempered by love; joy rejoicing in fear and inward thanksgiving; and that profound self-abasement, which can only come from the depths of a heart that knows its own vileness, and appeals for mercy, to the supreme height of Thy Divine Majesty.

CHAPTER XXIV

Of the Washing of the feet, and the sacred discourse of Jesus, at the Supper

I BLESS Thee, and give thanks to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, most highly exalted King of Saints, for that supreme example of deep humility and abject self-abasement, which Thou didst show forth, and leave to us for our imitation, when Thou, the most holy God, didst think no scorn of carefully washing, on Thy bended knees, and with Thy own ever-blessed Hands, of wiping, and of kissing, the feet of those poor fishermen, Thy humble followers: and, more than all this, didst also wash, with the same tender loving-kindness, the feet of Thy perfidious betrayer, although, ungrateful for all Thy benefits, foul within and unwashed, he went on still in his wickedness.

O wondrous tenderness of a Master to a disciple so hardened, O endearing complaisance of a most loving Lord to a servant who was utterly depraved, who was so case-hardened in his sin, that not even by Thy courtesy at the feast, nor by the gentleness of Thy menial service, nor by the sweetness of Thy discourse, could he be held back from his wicked purpose!

I praise and glorify Thee for Thy long reclining at the table of this most sacred Last Supper, at which Thou didst perform so many wondrous acts of love, that time would fail for their worthy recital.

I praise and glorify Thee, O Jesus, of Comforters the best, of Teachers the sweetest, of Helpers the most powerful, for that long, notable, and heavenly discourse, full of the fire of love, and sweet as a honey-comb, which, after the washing of the feet, and the departure of the traitor Judas, Thou didst, in words which all might understand, deliver to Thy disciples. By it Thou

didst take pains to comfort and strengthen their sad hearts against the tribulations which were to come upon them, giving them a sure hope of Thy Resurrection, of their being strengthened by the coming of the Holy Ghost, and of their being received after this their exile into the heavenly mansions of Thy Father; adding moreover many most beautiful words. And at last, at the close of this sacred utterance, with a faithfulness that knew no bounds, Thou didst, in true union of heart, gather them all up in Thy commendation of them to God the Father, saying: "O Father, I will that they may be all one, as we also are."

And hereupon Thou didst with Thy disciples enter a garden, apart from the busy hum of men, suited for private prayer, and there Thou didst prepare Thyself for Thy coming Agony, and Sacred Passion, speaking thus: "Sit you here and watch with Me, till I go yonder, and pray."

I pray Thee now, O most loving Jesus, my Master and my Lord, that Thou wouldst grant to me who am the chiefest of sinners, and Thy unworthy servant, to meditate with recollected mind upon Thy words so heavenly, and upon Thy doings so vividly set forth. Grant to me especially, I beseech Thee, to bow my most stubborn of necks to the doing of all work, no matter how humble, and to the fulfilment of all duties, no matter how servile; utterly to overcome my pride and false shame, that so I may learn to spend myself in the loving service, not only of my fellow-religious, and of my friends, but also of those who are repulsive to me from defects of mind or body. May I never think it a great matter to have to ask pardon for my shortcomings, when Thou, my God, wast not ashamed to bend Thy most sacred knees in the presence of Thy disciples, and to wash their feet. Taught, as I am, by Thy example, help me to carry into act what I hear and read of Thee.

But because I am at all points full of faults, and stained with all kinds of evil propensities, I need to be cleansed from my sins by a washing of exceeding thoroughness. To Thee, therefore, do I stretch forth my hands; and with the knees of my heart humbly bent before Thee, I pray Thee that Thou wouldst vouchsafe to wash carefully and thoroughly, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head; for in many ways have I sinned against Thee, by thought and by speech, both in what I have done and in what I have left undone.

Wash me, therefore, O my Jesus, from all the filth of my sins, cleanse me from every defilement, whether of body or of soul; that so, being made clean from head to foot, I may be found meet to have part with Thee, in that everlasting joy, which Thou hast promised to all Thy loved ones, who in times of temptation have held fast to Thee.

Give me also, I pray Thee, an understanding heart, that I may be able fully to comprehend that most sweet discourse, which Thou didst speak at the Supper: for its words are indeed words breathing love most fervent, comfort the sweetest, and wisdom the most exalted. So write Thy new commandment upon the tables of my heart, that my soul may be on fire with the twofold love which it enjoins: strengthen me in every trouble that may come upon me, and in place of this world's joys, fill me with the most sweet comfort of Thy Holy Spirit.

Give me that true peace of heart, which the world cannot give; give me the Spirit, the Paraclete, Whom the world seeth not, neither knoweth. Come, O Lord Jesus, and deign to make Thy abode with me, that Thou in me, and I in Thee, we may dwell together in one.

PART II

OF THE PASSION OF CHRIST,
ACCORDING TO THE FOUR
EVANGELISTS

CHAPTER I

Of the selling of Jesus by the perfidious traitor Judas

I BLESS Thee, and give thanks to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, of Goodness supreme, of Majesty eternal, for the wicked sale of Thee by Thy own disciple, by whom Thou wast sold for so paltry and mean a price as thirty pieces of silver.

I praise and glorify Thee for the surpassing meekness of Thy forbearance with that treacherous disciple, in that not only wast Thou not moved to anger, or to the use of harsh words, against him, but also (albeit Thou knewest the treachery against Thee which he was so soon to perpetrate) didst not at once make known his villainy to his fellow-disciples, nor didst suspend him from Holy Communion.

O most gentle Lord Jesus, how great is Thy patience, how great my impatience!

Woe is me that I find it so hard to bear with my brother, if aught is said or done to me which I do not like. Thou didst for so long a time uncomplainingly bear with Thy disciple Judas, who was shortly to sell and betray Thee: whereas I, for some slight wrong, fly at once into a passion, and concoct all sorts of plans for revenging or excusing myself. At such a time what becomes of my meekness, and of my patience?

Help me, O good Jesus, I beseech Thee, and instil into my heart more and more fully the virtue of Thy gentleness; for without Thy special grace preventing me, I cannot have the blessing of quietness of soul amidst the worries and the troubles, of which in this life there are so many.

CHAPTER II

Of the sadness and dread which Jesus endured for our sakes

I BLESS Thee, and give thanks to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, Maker and Redeemer of all the faithful, for the sad beginning of Thy most bitter Passion; for the exceeding distress of Thy soul; for the anxiety and dread, which, in the weakness of Thy human Nature, taken upon Thee of Thy own free will for our sakes, Thou didst feel, when, as the hour of Thy betrayal drew nigh, Thou didst begin to be fearful and very sad. Nor didst Thou think shame of confessing this sadness to Thy disciples, for Thou sadist: “My soul is sorrowful even unto death.” O wondrous dispensation of God! Thou, the Lord of all power, Who but a short while since hadst given strength to Thy disciples for the strife, dost now bear Thyself as One Who is weak, and wanting in strength and courage.

And all this Thou didst undergo in order the more perfectly to comfort us in weakness and faint-heartedness, lest perchance some one of us, when sorely tempted, should despair of pardon or salvation; for if such an one should feel himself less cheerful than he should be under suffering, less brave than he should be, in enduring trials of the flesh, he may still be able to say that which Thou art recorded to have said: “Nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt.”

O most loving Jesus, my only hope in every trouble and distress, make me, I pray Thee, to ponder with a heart full of compassion, the sorrowful beginning of this Thy blessed Passion, and from this sad prelude to go on by degrees to meditate upon the still more bitter parts of it, that so I may be able, from each several part, to gather for the wounds of my soul some healing medicine.

Grant that I may bear with patient courage, for the glory of Thy Name, whatever troubles may be awaiting me, that I may never fall into despair, no matter how severe the tribulation may be, but may in all things resign myself to the good pleasure of Thy Divine Providence.

CHAPTER III

The thrice-repeated prayer, the prostration before the Father of the Lord Jesus, and the resignation by Him of His Own Will

I BLESS Thee, and give thanks to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, Stay of Angels, Refuge of the distressed, for Thy agonizing prayer, and Thy lowly falling flat upon the ground; when thrice, upon Thy bended knees. Thou didst earnestly and devoutly beseech Thy Heavenly Father that, if it were possible, the Chalice of Thy Passion might pass from Thee, and yet didst ever add the words: “Nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt.”

I praise and glorify Thee, for Thy mighty struggle against the fear of death, and of the anguish of Thy most bitter Passion; when the flame of Divine Love burnt so fiercely within Thee, as to thrust out all human fear.

I praise Thee, and give thanks to Thee, for the copious shedding of Thy Sweat of Blood; when, being in an Agony, Thou didst pray yet more fervently; and, against the order of nature, didst give out from Thy body, as sweat, drops of blood.

I adore Thee, and give Thee glory, for Thy humble acceptance of the angelic consolation, which Thou, the Maker and the King of the Heavenly Host, for the more strengthening of our feebleness, didst not disdain to receive at the hands of Angels: that so, weaklings as we are, we may be led to seek, not the comfort which is but for a moment, but that true strength which comes from above.

O most sweet Jesus, with what fervour of Love must Thou have loved me, that Thou didst pray for me so earnestly as to give forth—in Thy great

desire to suffer for me—in place of natural sweat, Thy Own warm Blood, trickling down upon the ground.

O Almighty Creator of my soul, and perfect Pattern of my life, I praise Thee, and magnify Thee for ever, for Thy boundless resignation; and for Thy complete conquest of Thy Own Will, and of all Thy feelings as a Man, which would have made Thee shrink from pain and death. I praise and magnify Thee for having at once, without the least wavering, when the hour of Thy Passion was at hand, resigned Thyself freely and willingly to Thy Father's Will, saying: "Father, not my will, but Thine, be done." Words indeed these were, with which Thou didst magnify Thy Heavenly Father's glory: didst heap further benefits upon us; didst yet more firmly tread the devil under foot; and didst show forth, to those who believe in Thee, more plainly than ever before, the model of perfection, the ensign of salvation, and the path of the highest virtue.

O adorable Jesus, Thou Whose example we must ever keep before us, grant, I most earnestly beseech Thee, that I may obtain the fruit of this Thy thrice-repeated prayer, and that in the life in Religion which I have taken upon myself, I may strive to imitate the example of Thy self-denial. Give me grace manfully to bring into subjection to the spirit the stubbornness of my flesh; to crush all shrinking from bodily pain; to use prayer more often than before; to be ever watchful therein; to trust lovingly to Thee for help; to leave confidently in Thy hands the issue of all my undertakings; utterly to renounce my own will in everything; and to be always ready courageously to bear whatever troubles may come upon me.

CHAPTER IV

How the Lord Jesus went to meet His betrayer

I BLESS Thee, and give thanks to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Deliverer, for Thy cheerful readiness to suffer; in that, after Thou hadst offered to God the Father Thy thrice-repeated prayer, when Thy most cruel enemies, and Judas, Thy most wicked betrayer, came, in the dead of night, with a great multitude, with swords and clubs, and torches and weapons, to take Thee, as if Thou hadst been a robber, Thou didst at once Thyself go forth to meet them, saying: “Whom seek ye? I am He. If therefore you seek Me, let these go their way.” At which first word indeed of Thy power all that arrogant boldness of theirs was discomfited, and utterly put to confusion. For, as soon as Thou hadst said this unto them, they went backwards and fell to the ground. What then would have happened if, at Thy bidding, twelve legions of angels had come upon them? But it was to suffer that Thou hadst come into the world, and so, instead of using Thy Divine power, Thou didst will to show forth Thy most gracious forbearance. Thou hadst made plain, by one short word, the Majesty of Thy power: and now Thou didst allow those impious men to have dominion over Thee, and to wreak their venomous spite against Thee for a season; that so Thou mightest make it plain that it was of Thy own free will that Thou wast entering upon Thy Passion, for the accomplishment of the work of our redemption, and for the fulfilment of the Scriptures of the Prophets.

I praise and glorify Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, most innocent Lamb of God, for Thy unspeakable gentleness, and for Thy invincible spirit of meekness, in that Thou wast not inflamed with anger against Thy most wicked betrayer, and didst not indignantly turn Thy back upon him, but

rather didst deign to enter into friendly conversation with him; and addressing him with Thy wonted kindness, didst suffer him, unworthy as he was, to kiss Thy most sweet Lips, saying to him: “Friend, whereto art thou come?”—rebuking at the same time his wicked and deceitful insolence with those gentle words: “Judas, dost thou betray the Son of Man with a kiss?” He, alas! who had been one of the company of Thy apostles, neither fearing Thee as his Judge, nor pitying Thee as his friend, shrank not from his most horrible villainy; but putting himself at the head of that band of evil men, gave them a sign, saying: “Whomsoever I shall kiss, that is He, hold Him fast.” O vilest disciple of a Master most loving! O servant most perfidious of a Master most faithful!

O how wonderful was Thy love, how splendid was that patience of Thine, O most meek, most loving Jesus, Who even at the time of such an arrest, of so base a betrayal, didst not forget Thy old friendship and tenderness! Thou didst repay so great a wrong by bestowing a gift of healing; making whole, by the touch of Thy sacred Hand, the ear of the High Priest’s servant which Thy disciple had cut off, and bidding Peter himself, when he would have protected Thee from Thy assailants, to hold his hand, saying: “Put up again thy sword into its place. The chalice which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it? For thus it must be.”

Now, therefore, O my God, I beseech Thee to give to me, frail reed that I am, greater patience when things go wrong with me; and when my enemies insult me, or when charges are brought against me, of which I know myself to be innocent, let not sudden anger get the better of me, nor a love of revenge stir me up to render railing for railing. Grant me grace not to shrink from being found fault with; but to take reproaches in good part, and to think him my friend who blames or disparages me the most. Give me grace not to feel angry at any harshness shown me, and not to bear malice for any unjust complaint made against me; but to let the thought of Thy most gentle endurance of the wrongs done to Thee strengthen me to rejoice in my own, and fill me with a desire to suffer even worse things for love of Thee.

CHAPTER V

The fell seizure and leading away of the Lord Jesus

I BLESS Thee, and give thanks to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, Hope of the Saints, and their strong Tower in every distress, for the violent seizure of Thee by Thy hateful enemies; for the insolent laying upon Thee of the sacrilegious hands of those who sought to hold Thee; for the fierce looks they cast upon Thee; for the threatening shouts of the soldiers; for their rough and cruel binding of Thee; for their rude and ungentle holding of Thee fast; for their hasty and disorderly leading away of Thee; for the contumely and the violence with which they dragged Thee along; when, with wild tumult, Thou wast hurried away by vile and worthless scoundrels to Thy death; while the disciples, who were so dear to Thee, either fled, or with eyes full of grief and sorrow looked upon Thee from afar.

O King of Kings, O Lord Who rulest over all Thy creatures, and alone among mortals art free, how couldst Thou bear to be thus violently seized by evil hands, and to be led away in such contumely and disgrace, by men whom Thou hadst Thyself created, and to whom Thou hadst always done good? Alas! how grievous was the crime committed against Thee, how audacious the insult to Thy sovereign Majesty, when Thou, the Deliverer of souls, wast bound with a malefactor's cord; when Thou, Who wast altogether free from sin, wast led away a prisoner, as if Thou hadst been the vilest of robbers! But Thou, my most loving Jesus, supreme Author of all virtues, didst will to endure all these things most patiently for our sakes, that so Thou mightest set us an example of perfect meekness, and mightest fulfil that most plain of the prophecies of Isaias: "He shall be led as a sheep

to the slaughter, and shall be dumb as a lamb before His shearer, and He shall not open His mouth. He was offered because it was His own will.”

Compassionate, then, O my soul, thy most loving Lord God, an ill-used prisoner, enduring of His own free will all these things because of thy sins. Groan deeply, and let thine eyes be wet with tears of sorrow, at the thought of the Only-Begotten Son of God being treated with such indignity for thy sake. See what those most insolent dogs, the wicked Jews, are doing. They hold Jesus captive, they lead Him bound before Annas, and before Caiaphas the High Priest: but when He is seized He does not resist; when He is bound He does not complain; when He is led away He does not struggle with His captors; when He is being dragged along He utters no ill-word; but He goes meekly on, is quiet as a lamb, follows His captors as One Who is guiltless, bears everything as One Who is humility itself.

I pray Thee, then, O my God, that the thought of the bitterness of the grievous restraint thus put upon Thee may sink deep into my heart; may often rouse me, and chiefly at the hour of Matins, to fervour in the Divine Office; may drive from me all listlessness; and may make me constant, active, and watchful, in praising Thee, that so I may at least make some return for Thy love, and for the hardships endured by Thee, Who, for my sake, at night-time wast born, and at night-time wast betrayed, wast seized, and wast bound with cords. At night-time, therefore, O Lord, will I ever remember Thy Holy Name, calling to mind what great things Thou hast suffered for me, the chief of sinners.

May Thy painful bonds win for me true liberty, may they hold me back from unprofitable wandering abroad, and by strong discipline keep me ever in Thy service. May I not find it hard to overcome and get rid of self; and may I with a willing heart follow along the path of obedience the injunctions of my superiors, not shrinking from being led whither I would not, provided only that the command be such as is pleasing to Thee. May I never be found rebellious, quarrelsome, insolent, or noisy; but always kind, tractable and sober-minded; that so I may walk in the way of Thy commandments, and with humble devotion may observe the rites and ceremonies of Holy Church. Bow Thou down my neck to observe the rules of my Order, and bind my hands to fulfil the holy toil assigned to me. May roaming and idleness ever be distasteful to me; stiff-necked and self-willed as I am by nature, may an austere life, and the subdual of my own

inclinations be made to me my greatest happiness; and may I have grace to bring my own inner life, at least in some small measure, into conformity with the example which Thou didst set, when Thou wast bound, and held captive.

CHAPTER VI

The forsaking of the Lord Jesus, and the flight of the Apostles

I BLESS Thee, and give thanks to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, good Shepherd and gracious Master, for Thy most sad abandonment and for Thy loneliness, in the extremity of Thy need; when Thou wast left, by all Thy disciples and friends, quite alone in the midst of Thy most cruel enemies. For Thy brethren, and Thy familiar friends—who had promised to die, and to give their lives, for Thee—when the need came, one and all forsook Thee, and fled.

I praise and glorify Thee, for that tenderness of Heart, which caused Thee to suffer so cruelly from the cowardice with which Thy disciples turned their backs on Thee and deserted Thee, when leaving Thee their Shepherd in the midst of wolves, they were dispersed like sheep, every one to his own, even as Thou hadst foretold to them. Great indeed must have been the sadness, great indeed the anguish and the grief, which possessed the hearts of the disciples when they beheld their Lord and Master, Whom they had left all to follow, so violently torn from them, and hurried away to death. But Thou, O Lord, to Whom all things are known, and Who dost not allow anything to happen without its fulfilling some purpose of Thy own, didst permit these chosen vessels of Thine to show such great weakness in order that out of it greater good might come. From this fall, in short, it was that they were led to know their own frailty, and to sympathize with that of other weak brethren; and so ever afterwards they remained more distrustful of themselves, more fervent in spirit, more humble and more devout.

How useful is it for me to meditate diligently upon this subject, and never to think too highly of myself; for although when in prayer I do sometimes

have the grace of renewed fervour, yet I know not how long it will last, nor what may be in store for me in time of temptation. If the pillars of heaven, the Apostles of Christ, gave way in time of tribulation, what is a most frail and unprofitable weakling likely to do, when even a slight temptation assails him? Some indeed, O Lord, would cry shame upon Thy holy Apostles for their base desertion of Thee, and because, being beside themselves from fear, they tried to escape; but such men forget what an everyday thing it is for them to go astray under the stress of love or hate, as the case may be.

Do not, then, I pray Thee, my most dear Lord, suffer me to fall a victim to so great spiritual madness, as ever to turn aside from any holy purpose which I have taken in hand; and grant me grace to follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest, be it to life or to death. May I never forsake Thee in time of adversity, nor be drawn away by my own lusts so as to fall into sin; but may I rather, for the love of Thee, and in pursuit of what is good, play the man, by remaining firm under straits and hardships, of whatever kind; lest, at any time, through my own fault, I should come to lose Thee, my Highest Good. Let not the foot of pride come against me as concerning any good works done by me, nor let me ever join Peter in speaking presumptuously, putting myself before some one else, or claiming to be as good as others; but may I do everything in Thy fear, humbly remembering my own weakness. May the fall of holy Peter, and the flight of the apostles, be no stumbling-block to me; but may these things rather be a warning against sin. May the restoration of Thy apostles to Thy favour, which followed upon their repentance, give me a strong hope of again obtaining mercy after a fall of my own—for there is no one so holy as never to fall into venial sin of some kind—and when it so happens that my friends and acquaintances turn away from me, or those whom I love well think evil of me, and treat me as one who is of no account, and as it were a stranger to them; then, O Lord, grant that I may, for my own comfort, keep in mind Thy most grievous desertion and rejection, and count it gain to be deprived of all human consolation, if only I may thereby, in my small degree, be conformed to what Thou hadst to undergo.

Forgive me, O most merciful Jesus, for having so often offended Thee; for having been so ready to go astray after that which has profited me nothing; for not having kept my heart steadfastly fixed upon that which I

had resolved to do. Also, when I consider my ways, how often do I find that I waste my time upon vain things which can never profit, and fail, alas, in keeping Thy sacred Passion ever in my view! Thou hast trodden the narrow way before me, and I pass by without a tear, as if Thy anguish were no concern of mine. Take pity, I pray Thee, upon my cold dull heart, and fill it with a loving remembrance of Thy most bitter Passion.

CHAPTER VII

The arraignment of the Lord Jesus before Annas, the Priest

I BLESS Thee, and give thanks to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, Guide of our life, and Author of our salvation, for Thy first arraignment before Annas, the Priest, where Thou wast questioned about many things, and in return for Thy meek and truthful answer, wast rudely smitten on the cheek.

I praise and magnify Thee, my glorious King Jesus Christ, for the dishonour thus done to Thee, and for the shameful blow which Thou didst receive from the hand of an insolent servant, when in return for Thy answer he gave Thee a heavy blow upon Thy face, saying: “Answerest Thou the High Priest so?” And even after all this Thou didst not fail, O most gentle Jesus, undisturbed in mind or speech, meekly to make answer to him again, saying: “If I have spoken evil, give testimony of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou Me?” O most vile and impious servant, how was it that thou didst not fear to strike the Face of Thy Creator, deserving of all love, with thy guilty hands! How unspeakable, my adorable Jesus, was the virtue of meekness which shone forth in Thee, when, instead of avenging so insulting a blow with immediate chastisement, Thou didst calmly expostulate with him who struck Thee!

Bethink thee now, O Christian, and say whether, for love of Jesus, thou couldest endure a slap in the face. Thou who canst not bear a hard word without losing thy temper, how couldst thou bear to be smitten on the mouth? Thou dost grieve over the uncalled for violence offered to thy Lord; but much more sad, surely, is it that thou shouldst be so little able to endure, for Christ’s sake, even trivial wrongs. Thou makest grand resolutions, thy ideals are lofty; but the first reproachful word upsets thee, and thou findest

thyself weaker than thou hadst thought thyself to be. Flee then to Jesus, and pray Him more earnestly than ever before to give thee the virtue of patience.

O good Jesus, Thou strength and stay of the troubled soul, teach me to bear, with an even mind, blame and reproach; teach me, when complaints are unjustly made against me, not angrily to fight against them, but rather to get the better of them by meekly holding my peace; or, if speech be needed, may my words be such as to make of my adversaries friends. Put a right and loving word into my mouth in the presence of those that set themselves against me; and, when the hand of the wicked is lifted up against me, give me, O most gentle Jesus, for my impregnable shield, modest and imperturbable calmness of mind.

CHAPTER VIII

Of Blessed Peter, the Apostle's, thrice-repeated denial

I BLESS Thee, and give thanks to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, Who knowest all things before they come to pass, for having warned Thy over-confident disciple Peter, by foretelling to him his fall.

I glorify Thee for the anguish of Thy Soul at the grievous dishonour brought upon Thee by the thrice-repeated denial of Thee by Peter the apostle, when, to the challenge of a woman, he made answer in the words: "I know not the man."

I praise and magnify Thy Name for ever, for that gentle look which Thou didst mercifully vouchsafe to cast upon blessed Peter, that so, immediately upon the second crowing of the cock, he might be brought to a sense of his guilt; and going out at once from among those wicked men, might mourn with bitter tears, and with deep contrition of heart, his terrible sin of denying Thee.

He indeed did not, like wretched Judas, fall hopelessly into the pit of despair; but saved by Thy unspeakable mercy, and trusting to Thy boundless store of pity and loving-kindness, of which he had so often felt the tenderness, he sought at once with bitter lamentations that wholesome medicine of penance, which Thou hast provided for the healing of the disease of sin, and found set open wide before him the gate of infinite mercy.

O the surpassing love and pity of the Saviour! How inexhaustible is that fountain of Divine Mercy and overflowing grace, which has been opened to us; to which the sinner may always resort in the sure hope of being forgiven, and the just of always finding therein abundant stores of grace!

Would to God, then, that I might always have ready such a fountain of tears, that, like blessed Peter, I might be sure of worthily bewailing my sins, and of obtaining, by the help of his merits and intercession, the pardon which they need, and the grace which I have lost. Peter, indeed, fell because, in fear of death, he thrice denied the truth; but I, on the slightest cause, daily swerve from the path of virtue, and in many things sin against eternal truth. Peter, when he fell, rose again at once: I, alas, fall more easily than he did, but my recovery is not so swift; seldom do I bewail my sins; careless is the watch I keep over myself; I shun not danger as I ought. Peter shed bitter tears of repentance; taught by his fall he avoided occasions of sin; he sought for a secret place wherein to weep; and, by prayers full of holy grief, he washed away the stains which his careless words had brought upon his soul. How fruitful is the tear, which so soon blots out the sins we have committed, and by means of which even grace, which has been lost, may be recovered.

Holy Peter, remember me, and have pity upon me, a poor weak sinner, entangled in the snare of many evil lusts; that so by thy intercession I may be kept from being overwhelmed by the burden of my sins, and from giving way to despair at the thought of the punishment they have deserved. Thou, above all other Saints, canst sympathize with the fallen, and knowest full well how great was the mercy with which the Lord helped thee.

Come then, kind shepherd, to the help of a poor sheep which has gone astray; take out of the slough one who has fallen into it, comfort one who is sad, give courage to one who is faint-hearted; defend him from the adversary, keep him from every snare laid for him; and bring with thee, to that happy kingdom above, of which thou art a prince and the door-keeper, the soul of a brother for which Christ died.

And now, with sighs, which come from the bottom of my heart, I beseech Thee, O most kind and merciful Lord Jesus, to turn upon me those loving Eyes, with which Thou didst look upon Peter after he had denied Thee, and to grant me speedily the grace of holy contrition; that so I may be cleansed from all the sins, whether deliberate or indeliberate, which I have committed against Thee. Listen to the groans of my heart; heal the wounds of my evil conscience; give me once more the light of Thy grace; and keep from perishing a penitent soul, for the redemption of which Thou wast

content to endure such anguish, such insults, and in the end the cruel death of the Cross.

CHAPTER IX

The leading away of the Lord Jesus from Annas to Caiaphas the Priest, and the Lord's standing before him

I BLESS Thee, and give thanks to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, Chief Priest, and Perpetual High Priest, for Thy contemptuous leading away from the house of Annas to that of Caiaphas the High Priest, where the Scribes and Elders were gathered together to take cruel counsel against Thee. Ah! with what unholy joy were they filled, when they saw Thee Whom they had long wished to seize, but could not, because Thy hour was not yet come, brought before them as a prisoner. But this is their hour, and the power of darkness, permitted them by God that they might fill to the brim the cup of hate which they had so long been maturing against Thee; and might now at length openly give effect—to Thy honour and glory indeed, and for the salvation of the faithful, but for the eternal damnation of unbelievers—to their inveterate malice.

I praise and glorify Thee, adorable Jesus, for so modestly standing before the High Priest and all the Elders of the people, who were impudently staring at that Face of Thine, which is deserving of all love. Grievous charges were, by the falsest of witnesses, laid against Thee; the High Priest asked Thee many questions, adjuring Thee to answer truthfully; and at last, on a charge of blasphemy, Thou wast by them all, with loud voice, declared to be guilty of death.

I praise and magnify Thee, most noble Jesus, for each and every insult and falsehood levelled against Thee; for the lowly deference, and the silence, which Thou didst for so long a time maintain amidst the wicked

charges of Thy accusers; at all which Thou madest no sign of murmur or complaint, but didst set before us all an example of perfect gentleness.

Ponder, then, O loving follower of Christ, and lay seriously to heart, how great was the splendour of the lowly patience of Jesus under suffering! See what shameful reproaches He has to bear, Whose praises are sung by the heavenly hosts! For His truthful answer to the High Priest's question He is condemned as a blasphemer. And yet, assuredly, all those who so condemn Him, proclaim themselves blasphemers, and guilty of an awful and stupendous crime. In the madness of their hearts, not believing Him to be the Son of God, they wreak upon the Lord Jesus villainies of every kind; but He bears all in silence; and the more He allows Himself to be trodden under foot of the ungodly, the greater is His victory, the greater is His triumph over them.

Cease, therefore, O faithful soul, from thy passionate murmurings at reproaches cast upon thee, and from wishing to retaliate, and to be avenged, upon thy adversaries. Bow down thy back to sustain the burden of the earthly trials which come upon thee; nor seek to prosper in a world, in which Christ was content to be despised. Blush, thou proud one, at thy honours, thy high places, thy magnificent retinue, and thy fine clothing; seeing that for thee Christ was content to be absolutely poor. A disgrace it surely is for thee to covet the favours of men, and to hanker after earthly pleasures; for such desires are utterly at variance with a true following of Christ.

O most adorable Jesus, most meek, altogether lovely, grant to me, a miserable sinner, the grace of Thy favour, and teach me, by Thy shining example, not to be afraid of the threats and insults of the wicked, and not to be distressed at being unjustly accused; but rather to pray for the forgiveness of those who have wronged me, and to submit myself in all humility to Thee, and to my superiors; that so the gifts of Thy love may be more abundantly shed forth upon me, and I may have grace to praise Thee more earnestly for those already received.

CHAPTER X

The insults, the mockings, and the smittings of the Head, of the Lord Jesus

I BLESS Thee, and give thanks to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, Crown and Glory of the Saints, for the grievous contempt, and the foul insults to which Thou wast subjected, when, after Thou hadst been condemned to death, Thou wast so shamefully abused, and mocked with so many disgraceful words, by hard-hearted menials, and wast moreover frequently and roughly smitten on the head and face by them.

Oh, the thought that Thy altogether lovely countenance, upon which Angels delight to look, should be basely dishonoured by the filthy spitting of Jews, and be violently buffeted by the palms of their hands! Nor can we doubt that tears from Thy eyes mingled abundantly with the blood which was flowing from Thy nostrils. Thy beauteous neck is sorely bruised by the blows rained upon it by the fists of those who smite Thee. Those Eyes of Thine, clear as crystal, which are ever over the righteous, are blindfolded in derision, like the eyes of fools. Thy adorable Head, exalted far above all creatures, is rudely struck by the polluted hands of sinners; and with mocking shouts they insult Thee, saying: “Prophecy unto us, O Christ! Who is he that struck Thee?”

Who, O Lord, can hear of the indignities thus heaped upon Thee without being moved to deep sorrow and anguish of heart? Of a truth Thy capacity for suffering far surpasses ours; but the hearts of those who love Thee cannot but be deeply wounded at the thought of all the shame and disgrace which Thou hadst to undergo. From Thy friends Thou wast estranged; by Thy followers Thou wast deserted; Thou wast made a scoff and derision to them that hated Thee without a cause, who winked at Thee with their eyes.

Ah, my Lord and my God, how canst Thou suffer Thyself, as if Thou wert the most foolish of men, to be thus mocked, and spitted on and buffeted by the ungodly? Those raging Jews! All that night did they spend in mocking and in striking Thee; and by the time they had glutted themselves with Thy sufferings, they had so disfigured Thy Countenance, that scarce anyone would have known Thee: and yet, all the while, Thy unspeakable gentleness was unfailing, and although Thy impious tormentors could not discern it, the incomparable beauty of Thy Soul was unchanged. To all Thy chosen ones, however, Thou hast become still fairer and more precious, because, by the eye of faith, they recognize Thee as the most High God, and know that for love of them, all innocent as Thou wert, Thou didst suffer all these things.

I pray Thee, O most patient Jesus, that Thou wouldst teach me, in my meditation on the surpassing insults heaped upon Thee, to realize my own vileness, and how by my sins I have richly deserved to be despised, and to be condemned amidst the scoffs and hisses of my fellow men. Pity my shortcomings, and strengthen me to bear harsh words spoken to me, even when I blush for shame at their violence. For Thou, because Thou wast supremely humble, didst on behalf of me, a contemptible sinner, endure, without complaining, and with supreme meekness, many despiteful words, besides bonds and stripes. Oh how unlike Thee am I; how far from being truly humble am I, who for some trifling wrong or inconsiderate word, am angry with my fellow man; and, whereas I ought to be grateful for a reproof which was good for me, lose heart and feel impatient, and make no use of it!

Forgive, O Lord, I pray Thee, these my misdoings, and pardon my having so often offended Thee by my follies, my not having kept a pure conscience in my heart, and my not having shown towards Thee, and towards my fellow men, due humility and respect. Give me wholesome sorrow, and a fount of tears. Make me to welcome discipline, calling to mind the blows which Thou didst endure. Grant that even from the harshest charges brought against me, I may, by patience under them, win profit to my soul; and may, from my hearts of hearts, feel that I deserve to be looked down upon and put to shame.

May the thought of the hard smiting of Thy Head help me to bear my own bodily pain, of whatever kind it be; may the thought of the scornful

blindfolding of Thine Eyes check the curiosity of mine; may the thought of the filthy spitting upon Thy beauteous Countenance repress within me every fleshly lust; and may it teach me not to be dazzled by outward glitter, but to cultivate more earnestly than ever, the inward graces of the soul. May the thought of the mocking which Thou hadst to bear make me shrink from all levity of behaviour, and from all foolish jesting; and may the thought of the utter setting at naught of Thy Majesty quench in me all desire of being made much of, and lead me rather to seek a mean and lowly state. Amen.

CHAPTER XI

The arraignment, and the standing, of the Lord Jesus before Pilate

I BLESS Thee, and give thanks to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, most just Judge both of the living and of the dead, for the disorderly and noisy arraignment of Thee before Pilate, the Governor. For indeed, when morning was come, at the hour of Prime, the Chief Priests, having come together, and taken wicked counsel how they might put Thee to death, and having caused their attendants to bind Thee with cords, brought Thee before a man uncircumcised, a heathen Governor; and making against Thee, innocent as Thou wert, the most grievous charges, dared to proclaim Thee, Whom the holy Prophets of old had hymned as the Saviour of the world, a malefactor, and a perverter of their nation.

How dreadful was the wickedness of those Jews in seeking, upon the testimony of witnesses who were perjured, the condemnation of One Who was innocent; in compassing the death of the Author of life; in urging the crucifixion of Christ their King, and the putting to the most shameful of deaths of the Holy One and the Just. May all Thy enemies, O Lord, be confounded, and put to shame; for they deserve far worse punishments than those which they meted out to Thee.

I praise and glorify Thee, adorable Jesus, for Thy perfect demeanour, and for the deference shown by Thee, when Thou wast standing before the tribunal of Pilate, Thy judge; for Thou didst stand bound with cords, like a most meek lamb, in the presence of Thy accusers; with Thy Head bent down; with Thy Eyes fixed upon the ground; with Thy Face calm; speaking but few words, and those in a soft voice; content to bear reproach, and even blows.

Behold, then, and lay to heart, O devout disciple of Christ, how Thy Lord and Saviour, Who is the King and Judge of all men, submitting Himself humbly, and of His own free-will, to the secular power, allows Himself to be taken before the judgement-seat—in all which He has set before thee an example, that thou, too, who in so many ways art verily guilty, mayest learn to accuse thyself in Chapter, and to bear patiently being denounced by thy brethren. Submit thyself humbly to the judgement of thy Superiors; nor, if thou wouldst escape the pains of hell, venture to resist the power which is ordained of God: but, for the love of Jesus bear patiently an unjust condemnation, even if the punishment imposed be severe. Let not the thought of the patience of thy God—a patience shown when so many false charges were brought against Him—pass from thee without leaving its mark upon thy heart. Fall, then, at the sacred Feet of Jesus bound with cords, and plead for pardon and grace; entreat His forgiveness for all thy negligences, and that He will correct, in this thy mercy's day, thy offences, rather than, by reserving their punishment, cast thee out for ever with the reprobates.

Have mercy upon me, O good Jesus, have mercy upon me; for my soul trusteth in Thee. Breathe into me a right spirit, such as may kindle in me a fervent longing for progress in the inner life; that so I may strive with all my heart to humble myself, to give way and to submit to my superiors, and to bear all the burdens laid upon me. Grant that I may not stand in awe of men's judgements, and may not angrily defend myself against charges brought against me; but rather may love to be kept in order, to be censured, and punished; that so, the swellings of my pride being utterly trodden under foot, and my own will entirely brought into subjection, I may, by despising myself, come to love Thee more and more, and may be carried further and further onward on the road to Heaven.

CHAPTER XII

How the Lord Jesus was set at nought by Herod

I BLESS Thee, and give thanks to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, Eternal Wisdom of the Father; Thou Who art Truth itself, and the Infinite Power of God; for the foul insolence and bitter mockery, with which Thou wast mocked and derided by Herod and his soldiers. For indeed Herod had himself of a long time been desirous to see Thee; and, moved by curiosity, was hoping to see some sign wrought by Thee. But when, to his questioning in many words, Thou answeredst nothing, and didst work no sign—the time not being fit for so doing, because it was Thy hour for suffering, not for working miracles—soon, being moved to anger, he ceased to pay Thee respect, and treating Thee as a madman, insolently set Thee at nought; and having mocked Thee, by clothing Thee in a white garment, sent Thee back to Pilate.

I praise and magnify Thee, my glorious Jesus, for the fatigues Thou didst endure in being hurried about, as they led Thee, with shouts of derision, backwards and forwards, from place to place, through the streets and lanes of Jerusalem, from Judge to Judge; before each of whom they defamed and grievously maligned Thee; and of whom at length, after Thou hadst been long time examined and questioned, they demanded Thy punishment by crucifixion.

O how brightly shone forth in Thee at this time the patience, which was unmoved when goaded by mockings such as Thine. Surely the thought of Thy open setting at nought cannot but touch deeply the hardest heart; cannot but assuage the wrath of the angriest; cannot but bring tears to the eyes of those who love Thee! Thou, the most High God, art brought as low

as the lowest of mankind; Thou, the Almighty One, art rejected as one of no account; Thou, the All-Wise, art derided as a fool; Thou, the All-Holy, art adjudged to be the wickedest of men!

Woe to me, a miserable sinner, lying under a heavy burden of sin; for so far as my own merits are concerned I have deserved endless torments; and I must have passed to them, hadst not Thou, my loving, holy, and just God, vouchsafed to be mocked and despised, in order to save me, wretch as I am, from the mockings of the devil and his angels, and from everlasting death.

I beseech Thee, therefore, All-powerful Jesus, Whom no malignant, no contemptuous words could provoke, that Thou wouldst root out from me all vanity and daintiness, and that Thou wouldst give me grace to be content with poor clothing; for it is a shameful thing that one, who is but dust and ashes, should wish to be clothed in handsome or soft garments, when Thou, the King of Heaven, wast content to be set at nought in a white garment. Keep ever before my eyes the shame and the derision which Thou hadst to endure; teach me to follow Thee in willingness to be set at naught, and to be glad to be despised; teach me not to put my trust in the sons of men, nor in the princes of this world, nor in what friends can do for me; teach me to despise all earthly good, and those who run after it; to follow, with a steadfastness from which nothing can turn me, Thee, O Lord Jesus, the Author of my salvation; and ever to keep in remembrance the reproach which Thou didst endure for my sake, who am unworthy of the least of all Thy mercies.

CHAPTER XIII

Concerning the savage clamour of the Jews, —“Away with Him! Crucify Him!”

I BLESS Thee, and give thanks to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, perpetual Joy of Saints, for the great and insolent uproar with which the Jews raged against Thee, crying out in their fury:—“Away with Him! Away with Him! Crucify Him!” Alas, how great was the savagery of those miserable Jews; how inhuman was the cruelty of the Priests and of the Pharisees, who felt no fear at putting Thee to death, who felt no compunction at shedding innocent blood! The heathen Judge is moved to some sort of pity; but the hearts of the Jews are hardened to yet more cruel malice. Pilate would discharge Thee, he seeks to release Thee, he declares that he finds no cause of death in Thee; but the Jews, forgetting all the good works Thou hadst wrought among them, will not listen to him, crying out again:—“If thou release this man, thou art not Caesar’s friend: for whosoever maketh himself a king, speaketh against Caesar.”

Alas, with what utter falseness do they allege these things against Thee, Who never, either by word or deed, soughtest earthly honours; Who, when the people—whom, by working a miracle, Thou hadst fully satisfied with food—were anxious to make Thee a King, didst at once go forth alone to a mountain to pray, and to hide Thyself from them!

Nor are these lies enough for them; they go on to add still worse, seeking at any cost to force the Judge to put to death Him Who is very God. “We have a law,” they say, “and according to the law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God.” When the Governor hears these words, he fears the more, and asks:—“Whence art Thou?” And then he asks, “What is truth?” But there is no answer; for the Jews are instant in

demanding sentence of death. At length, anxious for the favour of princes, and led astray from the path of justice by the impious wickedness of the Jews, the Governor yields to their iniquitous demand.

What a sad and wicked a thing it was that the words of execration, “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!” spoken of the Blessed Jesus, should have resounded through the streets of Jerusalem. Who of those who love Him would not have mourned and wept, had he heard those accursed crucifixion cries repeated against his most loving Lord Jesus. What, then, must the most tenderly-loving Virgin Mother have felt, when those dreadful shouts, those death-dealing words fell upon her ears; when that cruel doom, that tumultuous demand from the lips of all the people for the death of her Son upon the cross filled the air!

Weep with her, O faithful servant of Jesus, no matter of how little account thou mayest be, weep with her, and draw forth from the recesses of thy heart moans of sorrow and compassion. Try to think with what anguish the heart of the Mother of God must have been torn, when she heard her blessed Son claimed for the shameful death of the cross. He in Whose Ears ever resounds the Angelic Song, “Holy! Holy!” ringing through the courts of Heaven, has now to hear the accursed tongues of Jews acclaiming Him with these words: “Away with Him! Away with Him! Crucify Him!” He Whom, but a short while since, on the Feast of Palms, the children had hailed with songs of praise, has now to hear—O awful change!—their parents madly demanding His crucifixion, and shouting: “Not this man but Barabbas.”

O thou to whom the Passion of thy Lord is dear, lay seriously to heart the thought of this hour, shut close the ears of thy heart against profitless chatter about things of this world, and throw them open wide to hear this miserable outcry for the crucifixion of Jesus. Be sure, O faithful soul, that it will profit thee more to meditate on it, than to know all about the wonders of the stars. If Jesus be indeed dear to thee, thou wilt not quit this theme without a bitter sigh.

When, therefore, the world is against thee; when it overwhelms thee with reproaches; be not overmuch disturbed by the spiteful words or threats of thy enemies, but call to mind the boundless patience of the Lord Jesus, and the accursed words, which He was content to hear for thy sake; and let idle talk pass thee unheeded. Should even thy good actions be distorted, and

many set themselves up against thee, cavilling at thy words, bear all this meekly; for thou art not more innocent than Christ, Who was assailed with shouts of “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!” Be warned beforehand, and know that in the way, along which God would have thee walk, thou wilt have to endure much opposition; and that thou wilt not have praise of God, unless thou hast been exercised by many sufferings for His sake. For it was He Who said to the friends whom He loved: “Blessed are ye when men shall hate you, and shall reproach you, for the Son of Man’s sake.” Follow, then, thy sinless Jesus, rejected indeed by evil men on earth, but chosen of God the Father, and crowned with glory and honour in Heaven. Let not evil words, which are things of a moment, get the better of thee, for whom is laid up by God an eternal weight of glory.

Now, therefore, O most gracious Lord Jesus Christ, I invoke Thy boundless charity, and pray Thee to kindle in my heart the flame of great sorrow for Thy Sufferings, to make it aglow with such a fervent love of Thee, that it may be joy to me calmly to endure evil-speaking, and accusations, of whatever sort they be. Grant that I may not fear the threats and annoyances of men, but may strive with all my might to imitate Thee in bearing the reproach of the Cross. Arm me against the inordinate desires of the flesh; and grant that, by fitting correction, I may crucify its evil lusts; may wash away my past faults by abundant tears of contrition, and may never deliberately yield to any further assaults of the evil one. Finally, I pray that in every spiritual conflict, and in every trial that may be laid upon me, Thou wouldest succour and defend me from the snares of the enemy, by holding above me Thy life-giving Cross. Set up though It was to put Thee to shame, may It be to me an ever-present help; that so I may render to Thee with faithful lips the sacrifice of thanks and praise for victory won under its shadow!

CHAPTER XIV

The stripping naked, the binding to the pillar, and the scourging of the Lord Jesus

I BLESS Thee, and give thanks to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, most kind Protector of all who hope in Thee, for the shame Thou didst endure in being stripped naked, in the sight of those who mocked Thee, when, by the cruel order of the wicked Governor, Thou wast ordered to be stripped by the Roman soldiers of Thy clothing, and to be hung upon the Cross quite naked, to be bound with hard cords, to be beaten with sharp-cutting rods, and to be scourged as if Thou hadst been a wicked seducer of the people, and the vilest of malefactors—all which was done to conciliate the wrath of the priests, who sought to glut themselves with Thy Blood, and to bring Thee down with sorrow to the grave.

I laud and magnify, and humbly praise Thee, especially for the fast binding to the stony pillar, which Thou didst endure, that so Thou mightest loose us from the bonds of our sins, and mightest restore to us that freedom which knows no end.

I praise and glorify Thee with thanksgivings which shall never cease, for Thy most cruel scourging; and for each of the hard stripes, and most sharply cutting wounds, inflicted on Thy most sacred and tender Body by those fierce soldiers who mercilessly struck Thy virgin Flesh, and rent it deeply, adding blow to blow, bruise upon bruise, that so there might remain no sound part in Thee, and that at each stroke numberless streams of Thy Precious Blood might gush forth like those of a crimson river—all which Thou didst endure that Thou mightest purge us from the deep-rooted pollutions of our sins, and mightest cleanse our souls from every guilty stain by Thy own most Precious Blood.

Alas, alas, O Lord my God, how great was the fury of those most wicked Jews, what hearts of stone were those of the men who struck Thee, who shrank not from scourging Thee, the fairest of men, all sinless as Thou wert; but reared themselves like giants over Thee, and did their very worst against Thee!

O Thou Holy and Well-Beloved Son of my Lord, Thou Who art Innocence itself, what hadst Thou done to deserve such bitter pains? Nothing, nothing. Why then was all this? It is I—I a man lost and undone—who am the cause of all Thy misery and distress. Woe be to thee, thou mighty burden of my sins, to rid me of which it was needful that the Son of God should endure such torments!

Keep therefore ever in remembrance, O faithful soul, redeemed by the Precious Blood of Christ, the Scourging of thy Lord; and, suffering so far as thou mayest with Him, give to Him in return the obedience of a heart filled with a lively sense of gratitude.

And thou, humble servant of God in religion, who livest under the strict rule of monastic life, fail not hither to turn the eye of thy mind in meditation. For if thou hast anything hard, anything contrary to the flesh, to endure; if only thou wilt meditate on the scourging of Jesus, it will be to thee light and easy to be borne. When, therefore, thou art reproved for thy faults, or art even to be scourged for thy transgressions, call to mind at once the thought of the all-sinless Jesus stripped, for thy sake, of His clothes, and for thy sake grievously scourged; and willingly get thyself ready to receive discipline in memory of the Passion of thy Lord, and to expiate thy sins. Fall humbly upon thy knees, lay by thy scapular, take off thy habit, bow thy neck, offer thy whole body to the discipline which has been ordered thee, and between the strokes, as they fall upon thee, meditate devoutly thus: “I gave my back to the smiters, and my affliction is ever in my sight: wash me yet more, O Lord, from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin: against Thee only have I sinned, and done evil in Thy sight: therefore have I justly deserved to receive discipline.” It is better for thee now with good will to receive temporal punishment, than hereafter to be condemned to everlasting torments. For those who shrink now from being scourged as Jesus was, will, in the life which is to come, be shut out from the Kingdom of Christ, as children who are unworthy of it.

O altogether sweet Jesus, Who for me, the chief of sinners, wast most cruelly scourged, grant that I may gaze with a heart full of sorrow upon each wound made upon Thy sacred Body by the scourge, and that I may kiss it with heartfelt fervent love; and so may feel the savour of life, and the medicine of eternal salvation, flowing forth from thence upon me. Set me aflame with the fire of that boundless love, with which Thou didst prove that Thou lovedst me, when Thou didst vouchsafe most patiently to endure so many blows of the cruel scourge for me, Thy servant lying under condemnation. When tribulation of any kind comes upon me, grant, I pray Thee, to my weakness the help of Thy grace; that so I may not be cast down under its burden, nor be too much distressed by it; but, remembering Thy undeserved scourging, may be found meek and submissive under what I have to bear, no matter how heavy it may be. Make me a partner in Thy sufferings, and stir me up to amendment of life by the chastening of sons, that so, by bearing punishment with due meekness and humility, I may in this life present become more pleasing to Thee, and in the life to come may rejoice with Thee more gloriously, in that Place, where all Thy Saints, no longer in fear of sin, rejoice for ever in the victory which Thy sufferings have won for them.

CHAPTER XV

Of the stripping, the mocking, the crowning, and the smiting of the Head, of the Lord Jesus

I BLESS Thee, and give thanks to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, illustrious King of Saints, and shining Crown of everlasting glory, for the many unheard-of outrages and affronts, to which Thou wast once more subjected by Thy impious tormentors, when Thou hadst been brought by the cruel soldiers into the Praetorium. There, the whole band being gathered together unto Thee, Thou wast shamefully stripped of Thy own garments, and instead of them, wast mockingly clothed in a scarlet cloak; that so Thou mightest clothe us, who are devoid of all goodness, with the cloak of Thy own holiness, and mightest adorn us with the sweetness of Thy Own nature.

I praise and glorify Thee, with the special devotion of a heart full of compassion, for the very great pain Thou hadst to bear for us poor worms of earth, when the Crown of Thorns was forced upon Thy sacred Head. For at that time Thy ever-blessed Head, hallowed above those of all other Nazarites, was oppressed by such a multitude of thorns, and was so grievously pierced, even down to the brain itself, that large streams of blood ran down everywhere over Thy Neck and Ears, over Thy Eyes and Cheeks, and made Thy sweet Face, which was as yet scarce dry from the spitting of the Jews, bloody and disfigured.

O sight of all sights the saddest; to see the Son of God, in Whom no spot of sin could be found, so ignominiously and so cruelly crowned!

How surpassingly cruel was the rage of the soldiers, who shrank not from piercing with so many thorn-points that Head, so noble and so worshipful;

and who even dared to insult the King of Angels by saluting Him in mockery, by smiting Him, and by making Him a gazing-stock to the multitude!

O most gentle Jesus, King deserving of all love, Crown of Confessors, Stay of the Church Militant, Joy of the Church Triumphant, Model for all who would follow Thee, how outrageously art Thou treated, how cruelly art Thou tormented; outwardly what affronts are heaped on Thee; inwardly with what unspeakable distress art Thou filled—and all for my sake; that Thou mightest save me from being confounded for ever, in the torments of Hell; that Thou mightest pluck out from my heart the thorns, which my sins have left in it; and that Thou mightest crown me, in the Heavenly Mansions, with a crown of glory and of honour that fadeth not away!

I laud and magnify Thee, for the mocking salutation, and pretended respect, shown to Thee; when Thy tormentors, bowing the knee before Thee, struck Thee on the Head; when they contemptuously adored Thee, and ironically styling Thee King, acclaimed Thee in the words: “Hail, King of the Jews!”

Behold, O man who must die, O servant of sin, to what anguish and contempt the Only Begotten Son of the Father is subjected for thy sake! Set open the ears of thy soul, and pour forth loving sighs and tears, as thou hearest Pilate’s cruel words: “Behold the Man!” If thou hast any bowels of love, let all that is in thee burst forth in groans and tears of compassion for the Creator of the Universe.

I praise and bless Thee, my adorable Jesus, for the despiteful mockery which Thou didst endure, when, to add to Thy distress, a frail reed was put into Thy right Hand instead of a royal sceptre; as if to proclaim Thee an audacious pretender to kingly rank.

I laud and magnify Thee for the most cruel smitings of Thy already wounded Head, which Thou didst endure when those pitiless men and most brutal tormentors, lifting high the reed, struck Thee many blows with it on the top of Thy sacred Head; and, yet again covering Thee with loathsome spittle from their filthy mouths, thrust out their tongues at Thee.

Come forth, now, ye daughters of Jerusalem, and behold Solomon your King, wearing the crown with which His mother, the Synagogue of the Jews, crowned Him, on the day of His Passion. Behold how mighty is He Who goes out before you! See amid what outrages and insults He is, by

Pilate's order, led forth; that so the pitiable condition, to which He has been brought, might be made known to all! In very sooth, to behold all this is misery, to think thereon is painful; with such affliction faithful love cannot but suffer in unison. See, from the Judgement Hall, goes forth the most meek and patient Jesus, wearing on His Head the Crown of Thorns, and clothed in a purple robe, that so perchance the rage of the fickle mob might be ever so little changed into compassion, at seeing their victim so dishonoured and ill-treated! But alas, alas, the angry crowd rages only the more fiercely; and, as the Governor calls out: "Behold the Man," it shrieks back its answer: "Away with Him! Away with Him! Crucify Him!"

When thou hast heard all this, O faithful lover of Jesus, and laid it to heart, tremble, and grow pale, at the thought of the extremity of His affliction. Beat thy breast, pour forth thy tears, and fall low upon thy knees, at the sight of Jesus crowned, and made believe to be a King, maltreated all the while like the most contemptible of slaves—remembering that He bore all this terrible pain and distress that He might check in thee the longing for earthly renown, and subdue in thee the fatal disease of pride.

Be ashamed, O man, slime of the earth that thou art, of seeking earthly renown, when thou beholdest the most noble Head of Thy Lord treated with such contempt. As member of a Body, the Head of which is crowned with thorns, be not for very shame, fond of pleasure: having before thee thy Lord, in all His Majesty, submitting to this hardship and disgrace, shrink thou from choosing a life of greater softness; and aim rather at a passionate longing for a severer discipline than any thou hast yet had to undergo. Stand in awe, ye proud ones, who pant to rise higher in the world, who crane your necks that your heads may seem to overtop your neighbours', not thinking that the more ye put yourselves forward the more ye demean yourselves. Blush with shame, ye exquisites, who dare to carry yourselves proudly in the presence of Jesus scourged and crowned; take shame to yourselves ye who dress yourselves up in jewels and silk attire, ye who pile gold and silver ornaments upon your bodies, so soon to perish and decay; take shame to yourselves ye who tire your heads, and flaunt your grand apparel, and all the while are neglecting the work of your salvation, and are forgetting at the cost of what dire pains your redemption was purchased.

Be comforted, be comforted, poor Lazarus full of sores, and thou, whoever thou art, who in this world art of no account; for thou, in thy

distress, and in thy low estate, art more in the likeness of Jesus of Nazareth than the rich man, as he goes his evil way, clothed in purple and fine linen.

And thou, cowed monk, take no shame to thyself for the meanness of thy habit, coarse, and covered with patches, though it be; for thou shalt have praise of God, and of His Angels, if it be thy outward apparel only which is mean and poor, and inwardly thou art adorned by a holy life! But take shame to thyself, thou monk, who oughtest to be dead to the world, and to rejoice in being poor, if thou wish for more dainty clothing.

What true and refreshing consolation is in store for a Religious needing comfort in distress, when he does not fail often to meditate out of a sad heart, upon the most painful crowning of Jesus, His Lord! As often, then, as thou findest thyself ill at ease, call to mind the many thorns with which the Head of Jesus was pierced, and thy pain will be made easier for thee to bear, whether it come from being vexed by others, or because thou hast a grievous headache, or (which is very often harder to bear) because the many-pointed stings of detraction are wounding thee. Better far, surely, is it for thee to suffer now with the suffering Jesus; and by bearing trials, of whatever kind they be, to wear thy crown of thorns with thy crowned Jesus; than hereafter, by reason of having followed thy own will and pleasure in thy life on earth, to have to suffer the pains of Hell, and to have to bear that worst of all the torments of the damned, the being cast out for ever from the presence full of joy of thy Saviour Jesus, and the being shut out for ever from the sweet company of the saints in Heaven. How joyously and fearlessly, at the dreadful Judgement Day, will that man stand before the King Eternal, who in this world does not shrink from bearing the reproach of His dishonour, and the anguish of His sufferings in the Flesh! How pleasing and how dear to God is that soul, and how fruitful is its meditation, which is inwardly bruised at the thought of the sufferings of Jesus, which is wounded to the heart by His Wounds, and at the thought of His death, expires with Him in a death of love.

I mourn over Thee, my loving Jesus, full of patience and meekness, in Thy cruel scourging, in Thy shameful mocking, in Thy painful crowning for my sake; and, that I may mourn the more deeply, I pray Thee to grant me the grace of a pity that may pierce me through and through. Humbly falling, therefore, at Thy Feet, I adore Thy glorious Majesty, subjected, in Thy Human Nature, to such insults and contempt; and, with lips vowed to Thy

service, I earnestly beseech Thee to imprint plainly, and to stamp firmly, upon the tablet of my heart the image of Thy afflicted Face, as It was in that hour when Thou wast thrust forth as a leper abhorred of all men; and, crowned with thorns, wast made a gazing-stock for the raging multitude. May this most distressful vision of Thee so pass into the secret recesses of my heart; may it so powerfully afflict and pierce it, that every worldly longing may perish from my eyes; that every lust of the flesh may utterly die within me; and that, for Thy sake, everything that is humiliating and distasteful may seem to me sweet and pleasing. May the thought of Thy sufferings crush within me all my evil affections; and may the remembrance of Thy most cruel anguish make my daily worries easier for me to bear. May the holy vision of Thy crowning, borne in upon my mind, and carefully and deeply meditated upon, bring me great comfort under the assaults of the enemy, and help me firmly to resist temptation to impurity in thought. For a heart occupied with heavenly things, and truly contrite, has no room for evil imaginations, and is shielded from the flying darts of the enemy.

Strip me, too, O Lord Jesus, of the filthy rags, which are all that I have of my own. Clothe me with true righteousness, and grant me to bear contempt cheerfully; that so I may learn not to take offence if I am deprived of necessities, nor to lose my temper if old clothes are served out to me instead of new, or rough instead of soft. Keep me from being angry with those who flout me, and from paying back in their own coin those who find fault with me. Remembering Thy Crown of thorns, may I, for my own Salvation's sake, take calmly everything painful and distressing that comes upon me. Finally I pray that Thou wouldest pierce the hardness of my heart, and wouldest drive one of the sharpest thorns of Thy Crown right through its very centre; that so all the bad blood which is in my flesh may flow out through the wound which it makes, and the sharp goad of Thy holy love may remain fixed therein, till the thorns of my besetting sins, and the thistles of my temptations are thoroughly purged out of it, and I have become fit to be a seed-plot for virtues; and so the soil of my heart, poisoned as it is by the primeval curse, may again receive a blessing from the inpouring of Thy sacred Blood; and, in place of the thorn of envy, may bring forth the rose of charity, in place of the nettle of lust, the lily of

chastity, in place of the burdock of vanity, the violet of humility, and in place of the bramble of harshness, the flower of gentleness.

CHAPTER XVI

Of the unjust condemnation of Jesus to death

I BLESS Thee, and give thanks to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, Author of life, and Model of justice, for Thy unjust condemnation to death, although guilty of no offence at all; whilst a man guilty of murder and sedition, who had deserved sentence of death, was released. How perverse was such a judgement! How unjust was such an exchange! But when a mighty tumult was made of the people, and the judge saw that in no other way could he satisfy the ferocity of the Jews, he took his place upon the judgement seat, and pronounced against Thee the wicked sentence, that Barabbas the robber, who for a capital crime was worthy of death, should go scot-free; and that Thou, who wast altogether guiltless, shouldst be condemned to suffer that most shameful of deaths, the death of the Cross. Of what sort, alas, is the judgement of this world, and how shockingly is justice trodden under foot when the wicked begin to have dominion! Behold how the just perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart! Alas, alas, He Who is Truth is delivered over to men who are false, the Holy One is scourged by sinners: He Who is guiltless is condemned instead of him who is guilty: a robber is chosen instead of Christ: and Barabbas, who had been cast into prison, is set free instead of Jesus of Nazareth! The lamb takes the place of the wolf; the Holy One that of the malefactor; the Best of men that of the worst; the man whose life was forfeit escapes, instead of Him Who is very God. Darkness is more highly esteemed than light, vice than virtue, death than life, clay than gold, a shell than a pearl, one who is infamous than One Who is most noble.

Which of us on hearing these things can withhold a sigh? Which of us can help burning with anger against the Jews? Which of us can help blaming the Judge? The Judge may wash his hands, he may excuse himself

before men; we may grant that he acted in fear of Caesar, and that he was overborne by the uproar of the Jews; yet is he not wholly free from guilt; for he knew that they had delivered Him up out of envy. Better, surely, would it have been to have sacrificed high place, and the honours of this world, than to have condemned One Who was innocent, and Whom the Governor knew to be such. More profitable had it been to have lost the whole world, than to have sinned against God, and to have put Christ to death!

How terrible, at the last day, will be the judgement of the ungodly and unbelieving, when God the Judge, Who is now condemned unjustly, shall have come in His glorious Majesty! Then shall all the godly and faithful rejoice, who now mourn over, and lament, the unjust condemnation of Jesus Christ, their Lord. Then shall they be joyous and free from care, who now patiently bear the hardships of this world, and submit to being wronged and despised.

O my sweet and loving Lord, Who wast unjustly condemned by Pilate the Governor, and sentenced to the shameful death of the Cross, grant that, whatever sentence may be passed against me in Chapter for my faults, I may humbly submit to it, and may never rashly judge my Superior, nor reply angrily to my accusers; but, after the example of Thy patience, may keep that silence which becomes me. Grant that I may not take unduly to heart being put upon by one who is above me, but may always leave my cause in Thy hands: for the servant is not greater than his Lord; and if Thou, Who art the Judge of all men, and wast absolutely guiltless, didst make no resistance to the violence of Thy adversaries, but didst submit to be unjustly condemned, how much more ought I to be ready to bear; and how cheerfully ought I to submit to the judgement of my brethren, who have, in so many ways, and so often offended? Help me, O gracious Lord Jesus, willingly to bear the yoke of subjection, and the rod of correction, and in every trouble that comes upon me, to call to mind Thy anguish.

CHAPTER XVII

Of the bearing by Jesus of His Cross, and His being led forth to the place which was called Calvary

I BLESS Thee, and give thanks to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, true Vine, Way of Life, and our Salvation, for bearing before all men Thy heavy and shameful Cross. For the Salvation of the whole human race, Thou didst vouchsafe humbly to take it up, and most patiently to bear it; that so, upon Thy own Shoulders, Thou mightest bring back, to Thy home in Heaven, the lost sheep so long sought after, and found with so much toil and trouble.

I laud and magnify Thee, illustrious Standard-bearer of the army of Christ, for Thy sorrowful and distressing journey, when, with the heavy wood of the cross roughly laid upon Thee, Thou wast ignominiously led forth outside the walls of that renowned city, in which Thou hadst so often manifested forth Thy glory by miracles worked, and holy doctrine taught therein. Now, however, amid the furious outcries of the whole people arrayed against Thee, Thou art treated as a comrade of thieves, and a chief of robbers, and art going forth to be hanged, as one utterly vile and worthless, upon the highest cross of all, between two of the worst of malefactors.

I praise and glorify Thee, most gracious Jesus, for that cruel and most wearisome progress, for that journey amid such horrible surroundings, which Thou didst undertake for us. I praise and glorify Thee for each step Thou didst take; for the exceeding weariness and weakness of Thy Body caused by Thy previous sufferings; for the ascents and descents of the winding road, made more grievous to Thee by the burden of Thy Cross; for

the haste with which Thou wast at one time urged forward from behind, and at another time dragged roughly on from in front, by the hard-hearted men of the guard in charge of Thee; hither and thither buffeted about by them. For Thou couldst only move with Thy Body bent almost double from the weight of that burden, so far beyond Thy strength, which Thou wast compelled to bear to the Hill of Calvary. Never before hadst Thou trodden so cruel a road; never before hadst Thou borne so grievous a yoke.

I laud and magnify Thee for the despiteful usage Thou hadst to endure from those brutish men who led Thee forth to execution, at one time abusing Thee, at another ill-treating Thee. I laud and magnify Thee for the many vile words which they used to Thee; for the many false slanders against Thy innocence which they hurled at Thee, as Thou wentest Thy weary way; for the insolent exultation of Thy enemies at the cruel death awaiting Thee, and for their savage joy at the hope of seeing Thee hang upon the shameful Cross—amidst all which horrors, heaped upon Thee from every side, Thou didst go as a meek lamb carried forth for sacrifice, having before Thee our salvation as Thy aim; pitying the blindness of the Jews; and sorrowing over the malice of those who were leading Thee to the place of execution.

I praise and bless Thee for the loving hearts of Thy friends; for the abundant tears of compassion which they shed for Thee; and for the faithful companionship of the sad-hearted women, who step by step followed Thee on Thy way, with looks modestly downcast, most bitterly bewailing Thee. Turning to them, Thou didst restrain their mournful sobs with these gracious words: “Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not over Me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For if in the green wood they do these things, what shall be done in the dry?” O how bitter at that time was the grief of those who were dear to Thee, and how above all bitter was the lamentation of the holy women, who looked at Thee with eyes full of compassion, but were unable to come near to Thee, or to save Thee from going to Thy death.

And how inconceivably great must have been the woe which filled, and racked, the Mother’s heart of Mary the Virgin, as she saw Thee, her only, her most dearly loved Son, bearing the Wood of the Cross, and going forth to die! O how willingly, had it been possible, would Thy blessed Mother, the most loving Virgin Mary, have endured for Thy sake the terrible shame

of the Cross; and how gladly would she have offered herself to die instead of Thee, had she thought that this would have been pleasing to Thee. But that which was actually not possible, nor permitted, that mentally she did indeed bear to the full; for who, among the sons of men, could compassionate Thee so fully, could mourn for Thee so keenly, could so truly bear Thy cross with Thee, as she, who loved Thee so fervently? No other heart of those who loved Thee could Thy anguish have so deeply pierced, as the loving heart of the one who was Thy Mother, the Virgin of surpassing love.

Nor may we doubt that Mary Magdalene, whose love for Thee burnt so brightly, and the bitterness of whose sorrow for Thee had made her scarcely able to stand, would, with a supreme effort of love, have willingly joined Thy Virgin Mother in laying hold upon Thy Cross, and would gladly have borne it with her in Thy stead.

The inward burden of Thy anguish was thus in many ways increased; for beside it, Thou didst also have to bear the things that came upon Thee from without, Thy being forsaken, namely, by Thy disciples, Thy Mother's grief, the stumbling-block which Thy tribulation was to many, and the faint-heartedness of those who despaired of Thy Resurrection: for, except that of the glorious Virgin, the faith of all was wavering, or seemed to be extinct.

O faithful disciple of Christ, make thou also haste to share the burden of the mystic Cross; and, if thou wouldst attain to joys eternal, strive now to follow thy Redeemer's steps. Shrink not from the slight hardship of a penance set thee, seek not to have the severity of discipline made less; but think that to be easy and light which the Rule of thy Order bids thee bear; fulfil with joy whatever holy obedience requires of thee. Should it seem to thee hard to obey its every precept, remember that for thy sake Christ became obedient to precepts harder still, even to the most shameful death of the Cross. Keep, then, the strict Rule of the Fathers, quit not the path which leads to a throne. Shun that easier lot, by choosing which the slothful are so often brought to a bad end. On entering Religion, thou didst indeed take upon thy shoulders the Holy Cross, and, on being Professed, thou didst bind thyself to it still closer. To lead a holy and perfect life in Religion is to follow the Crucified. By observing the Rule of thy Order with all thy heart, thou bearest thy cross cheerfully. If thou bearest it unwillingly and grudgingly, not the Glory of Jesus, but the cross of the impenitent thief, will

be thy reward; but if thou endurest all things willingly and joyfully, thou hast in great part won thy victory over the evil one. Fear not, therefore, the strictness of thy Order, nor count the days long that thou passest in it: the love of Christ and the sweetness of a good life will lighten the burden of thy hardships. There is One Who lived a life far harder, and Who set thee an absolutely perfect example, even Jesus the Son of God, the great Patron of the Cross, Who Himself made full proof of its weight. Follow, therefore, thy Saviour along the way of the Cross, by holding fast to thy life in Religion, and by never growing careless in the observance of thy vows, and thou shalt be safe for ever. For hadst thou wished to enjoy the good things of this life, or to follow thy own business or pleasures, thou mightest have remained in the world. As, however, thou hast chosen to follow Christ by entering Religion, hold fast to the Rule to which thou hast promised obedience. Pray Jesus to give thee His powerful help in doing this; for He Who at the outset gave thee grace to begin well, will doubtless perfect the good work which He began in thee.

O my dearly loved Jesus, Prince of the kings of the earth, Leader of the Angelic Host, illustrious Standard-bearer of all Christians, Who, for the salvation of Thy servants, and that Thou mightest set them a perfect example, didst bear upon Thine own shoulders Thy cross, amidst the jeers and scoffs of the Jews who surrounded Thee, grant me grace, slow of heart though I be, to follow Thee along Thy weary road; be with me to the end; and then lead, I pray Thee, my soul, now absent from its true home, from this body of sin to the Mount of Calvary, the hill of myrrh and frankincense, where Thou wast, for my sake, crucified and slain, that there I may rest under the shadow of Thy Cross, safe beneath its holy sign. Grant that I may now make a fresh start, and may follow Thee, not with the infirmity of purpose of those who are neither hot nor cold, but with renewed fervour of heart; keeping my eyes steadily fixed upon Thee, the Cross-bearer, and not letting them stray hither and thither like those who are inconstant in their ways. Be Thou my guide along the narrow road, and my companion as I follow it: be Thou at hand to help me when things are going well with me, to comfort me when they are going wrong, to sustain me in all the trials which I may have to undergo for the sake of Thy Holy Name. Help me to bear the burden and heat of the day, that I may be able to join my brethren in every Divine Office and holy observance. Grant me also, in my more

serious troubles and anxieties, to call to mind Thy most cruel weariness under the burden of Thy Cross; for the paltry burden which is laid upon me will seem the merest trifle, if I think of the weight of the heavy Cross which Thou wast content to bear.

May I, then, trusting to the help of Thy grace, with a willing heart submit to, and even rejoice in, the burden of the life in Religion which I have taken upon me; for even if for a while, in order that I may win the merit of humility, Thou dost suffer me to feel it heavy, yet afterwards, at such time, and in such way, as Thou seest fit, Thou dost mercifully give me the grace of Thy ready help in bearing it. Teach me to conquer my own will, to be content with few things, and not to hanker after leave to walk abroad. May my hands be ever busy in the work which I have to do; may my heart be ever occupied in meditating upon Holy Writ; may all my limbs be employed in Thy service, all my senses kept under strict control; number me, I beseech Thee, poor and of no account though I be, among Thy true cross-bearers. Keep me from mixing with men of the world, and mortify in me all the desires of the flesh. May I never concern myself with the affairs of others, nor deal in idle gossip; but may I strive to keep my thoughts fixed upon the concerns of my own inner life, and to grieve in secret, with many a sigh and groan, over all the various things which I have done that I ought not to have done, and have left undone that I ought to have done. May I lay aside everything that would hinder my spiritual progress. May I run in the way of those who seek Thee, and have learnt to rise above things temporal by keeping their thoughts fixed upon the things that are above. May I ever keep carefully in mind Thy Cross, so lovingly borne for my sake; and while I burn with love of the Cross, may I at the same time commit all my ways into Thy hands, and resign my will to Thine: and so, patiently and submissively bearing the burden laid upon me, until my appointed time shall come, may I at length reach the wished-for haven of safety and of peace.

CHAPTER XVIII

Of the Crucifixion, naked, of the Lord Jesus; and of His hanging for many long hours aloft upon the Cross

I BLESS Thee, and give thanks to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, most gracious Fashioner of man, and Restorer of his fallen nature, for the shame of nakedness endured by Thee at the foot of the Cross, when before the eyes of the mob who, like beasts of prey howling for their food, were roaring at Thee, Thou wast stripped of Thy clothes, and put to open shame. After all Thy clothes had been roughly taken from Thee, and had been given away as prize, there didst Thou stand blushing, trembling, girt only about the loins with a thin linen cloth, and crowned, instead of a diadem, with a garland of thorns, set at nought of men and utterly despised and rejected: there didst Thou stand, absolutely stripped of this world's goods, as an outcast of the people and a poverty-stricken alien, nay rather as the very poorest of the poor, bereft of everything and of every human consolation. For as, in the Garden of Eden, before Paradise was lost, the first Adam went naked; so now Thou too dost, in like manner, ascend the Cross naked, to regain for us that lost Paradise, from which Adam was cast out, and driven forth. For it was in order that the innocence which had been lost might be restored to fallen man; and in order that he might be clad in a robe of righteousness, and might be made an heir of everlasting life, that Thou didst submit to be deprived of Thy clothing, to be overwhelmed with anguish and distress, and in the end to pay the penalty of a most cruel death.

I praise and magnify Thee, Who wouldest all men to be saved, for the merciless way in which Thou wast stretched out upon the hard wood of the

Cross, so roughly spread for Thee as Thy reclining-board; for the sharp piercing of Thy hands and feet, and for the driving into them of huge nails, the noise caused by which could be heard far off, and must have moved to tears even the hardest-hearted of the beholders. Thou wast, also, so firmly nailed to the Cross that Thy veins suddenly burst, and streams of Thy precious Blood poured forth from all parts of Thy Body. So ruthlessly indeed was Thy Body stretched out lengthwise and breadthwise, as if it had been the skin of a drum, that all Thy joints were loosened, and Thy bones could be distinctly counted. Thou didst allow Thy Hands and Thy Feet to be thus pierced by the ungodly, in order that by having Thy sacred Hands fastened to the Cross, Thou mightest discharge the debt incurred by Adam in stretching forth wicked hands to touch the forbidden tree; and, by shedding Thy innocent Blood, mightest wipe out the long-standing obligation of a sacrifice for sin.

I praise and glorify Thee for Thy being lifted up on high upon the Cross, and for remaining hung so long upon the arms of that Tree of shame—the Tree which was at that time held by all Jews to be accursed, but is now held in supreme honour by all Christians, and blessed above every tree that grows. On It, for our Salvation, didst Thou hang, for three full hours or more, working out those great and wonderful mysteries of the Cross, from which were to flow such inestimable benefits for all the world. Thou wast lifted up from the earth that Thou mightest draw up after Thee the loving hearts of those who believe in Thee, and prevent their leading a mere butterfly life in pursuit of earthly joys; that, by commiserating Thy sufferings, the tender hearts of Thy faithful ones might become yet more tender, and, at the sight of Thee upon Thy Cross, their love might burn still brighter; that in Thine Own Person Thou mightest triumph fully and openly over the powers of the air; that by thus humbling Thyself, Thou mightest make for transgressors intercession which could not fail of being heard, and mightest assure to the truly penitent full and free forgiveness of their sins; and that, by Thy death, Thou mightest reconcile the things which are in Heaven and the things which are in earth, and mightest make all things new.

Lift up thine eyes, then, O faithful servant of Jesus, and with sad heart, and mournful countenance, look upon thy Redeemer and thy God, hanging between the lofty arms of the Cross. Thy loved One hangs there naked, that thou mayest look on Him; His feet cannot move, but He waits for thee to

come to Him, He longs for thee freely to draw near to Him. He lovingly opens wide His Arms, He shows thee His gaping wounds, He bends forward His Head to kiss thee, He is ready to receive thee into His favour, and without delay to forgive thee all thy sins. Draw near, then, boldly to the Cross, touch lovingly that which represents it, embrace it fervently, hold it firmly, kiss it devoutly. Throw thyself at its feet, lie there, cling to the ground it hallows, go not from the Cross; that so at least one drop of the Blood which is trickling from it may fall on thee; or that thou mayest win to hear some word spoken by the Crucified, or, when the end comes, to stand by His side. May the same earth which received Jesus at His death, receive thee too; and where Jesus was buried, there mayest thou too find the place of thy rest, that as thou art one with Him in spirit, so also thou mayest be in the last resting-place of thy body.

Pay to Him the duty, which thou owest Him, of thy tears; enter into the secret chamber of thy heart; let the Crucified find in thee a loving and a sorrowing disciple, one who is thankful and devout, a cherisher of the inner life, and one who is drawn by the cords of love to His wounds; that so the whole world may be crucified to thee, and thou to the world; that so to thee to live may be Christ, and to die with Him thy greatest gain. Be it far from thee to glory, save in the Cross of Jesus Christ, thy Lord. Be it far from thee to trust in thy own merits; because upon the Cross of Jesus alone depend thy Salvation and thy Redemption, and on Him thou art most firmly bound to place thy only hope. Through Him it is that thy sins are forgiven, from Him it is that rich merits flow forth abundantly; with Him are the rewards of the righteous; and He will give to every man the just recompense of his deeds.

Strive therefore, after the example of the Crucified, to cast off the burden of things earthly, and to withdraw thy heart from all that may be hurtful to its inner life; to hold thyself aloof from the unrealities of thy passions and of worldly cares; and to live thy life in the pure nakedness of truth; that so thou mayest be able, by despising thyself and all transitory things, purely and humbly to fashion thyself after the pattern of Him, Who hung naked upon the Cross; and so, by meekly bearing, because of thy burning love for thy suffering Redeemer, detraction and disgrace, thou shalt be made strong, and worthy of being raised upon a cross of thy own. Learn to rejoice in being despised and set at nought, to grieve more than thou art wont over the

sins of others; and pray that all men may lead better lives. Deem thyself fit only for contempt, and yearn for the salvation of those who do thee wrong. Put small trust in men: few are faithful in time of need; and friends, who will stand by you, are seldom to be had. Wonder not at this; nor think it sad. Christ knew what it was to be forsaken by His friends, and to be surrounded by enemies: He Who went about doing good was repaid by base ingratitude. Put thy trust in the Crucified, thy Guide, and gracious Master; even in the time of trouble hold fast to Him, as He hangs upon the Cross, and thou shalt find grace, and be victorious over all thy enemies. But make ready a place for Him, and prepare, by humble and devout contrition of heart, a way for God's grace; that so thou mayest be able to draw sweet comfort from the wounds and sufferings of Jesus, and mayest taste how pleasant a thing it is to bear reproach, and to be treated as of no account, for the sake of His Holy Name. Choose a solitary life, so as to be able to get rid of causes of distraction; to find comfort in the Cross; to withstand sensuality; to guard against venial faults; not easily to fall a prey to idle vanities; to hold thy peace as to matters which do not concern thee; carefully to cherish the good that is within thee. For it ill becomes one, who is devoted to the Passion, to give way to immoderate laughter; and to be wanting in gravity of behaviour is not consistent with a life in Religion. All these things are to be learnt from the Passion of the Crucified, and happy is the man who is daily exercised therein; for his spiritual progress will be sounder than that of his brethren, he will be fed with the fruit of the tree of life, and he will have joy therein for ever.

Look, O Heavenly Father, upon the Face of Thy Christ, as He hangs upon the Cross for me; and for the sake of the all-sufficient merits of Thy Only-Begotten Son, pierced with nails, and besprinkled with blood, be merciful to me a sinner, tied and bound with the chains of so many sins. For He was wounded to blot out my iniquities, He will make satisfaction to Thee for all my sins, He will answer to Thee in my stead. Him I offer to Thee as my Surety; Him I choose as my Advocate; Him I put forward as my Mediator; to Him I leave the defence of my cause. He will make good all in which I have fallen short; He, the blessed Fruit of the Virgin's Womb, will fully atone for all my transgressions of Thy commands. His pleading on my behalf, O most merciful Father, Thou wilt surely take pleasure in accepting; and thus, on account of His exceeding love, and great desire for my eternal

salvation, I may always feel that hope and consolation, which in this life are profitable for me, and without which, in the life to come, I must needs be undone.

O good and tender Jesus, All-Holy Son of God, Who, in fulfilment of Thy Father's Will, didst vouchsafe to take upon Thee, without any spot of sin, the substance of our flesh, and to offer the same upon the altar of the Cross for the salvation of the world, have mercy upon me, Thy servant, who pray to Thee for pardon and for grace. Of Thy goodness, and for the infinite merit's sake of Thy Passion, forgive, I beseech Thee, all my sins, whether new or old, whether committed against Thee knowingly, or unknowingly. Thy merits far outweigh the sins of all mankind; and the fullness of Thy atonement far exceeds my every sin, no matter how often committed. To Thee, therefore, do I flee for refuge, invoking the protection of Thy Cross, to which I trust for mercy greater than all my need; to Thee, from the bottom of my heart, do I cry, beseeching Thee to help me, and to save me. I venerate the sign of the Cross, I honour the banner of the Cross, I kiss the foot of the Cross, I invoke the aid of the Cross. Harken to me in my distress; receive me, who flee to Thee for help; heal me, who come to Thee in contrition of heart; justify me a sinner. Till I am taken back into Thy favour, I will not leave Thee, nor let Thee go.

Root out of my heart, I pray Thee, O my Crucified Lord Jesus, all love for the things of this world. Take me by the arms, and raise me to the height of Thy Cross; let me follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest. With Thee at hand, and keeping close to Thee, and so lifted up above all earthly things, gladly will I share Thy poverty and nakedness, passing my life in this world as an exile and unknown. Implant in my flesh the fear of Thee, lest I give way to sloth or laziness; transfix my feet, that so I may steadfastly persevere, and may bravely endure toil and sorrow. May Thy nails be driven through the centre of my heart, and rack me with a wholesome wound, that so I may shed abundant tears of true contrition, and be as it were beside myself with the intensity of my love. Inspire me with sorrow, increase my devotion, till nothing is dearer to me, and nothing closer to my heart than Jesus Christ, and Him Crucified.

CHAPTER XIX

Of the Wounds of Jesus, and the shedding of His precious Blood

O LORD JESUS CHRIST, Author of our Salvation, most gracious Giver of pardon, most patient in Thy long-suffering of man's wickedness, I bless Thee, and give thanks to Thee for all the pain, and for each several blow and bloody wound, so cruelly inflicted on Thy most precious and most tender Body; so that from the sole of the foot even to the top of the Head there was no soundness in Thee, but either a grievous wale, or an aching wound, or a stream of warm red Blood trickling down Thy whole Body.

I praise and glorify Thee with the worthiest adoration of which I am capable, and with all the powers of my soul laid at Thy Feet, for the generous outpouring of Thy precious Blood from Thy five sacred Wounds, and from all Thy other wounds, great and small, bleeding and sending forth a life-giving stream, more precious than any balm, to be an effectual remedy for all our sins. Ah! most gentle Jesus, how cruelly wast Thou tortured and wounded by savage men, so that all Thy bodily strength being exhausted, and Thy veins wide-opened, scarcely a drop of Blood remained in Thee; but whatever of that sacred Stream, whether living or dying, Thou hadst in Thee, was all lovingly poured forth for our souls' use, and as the price of our Salvation.

O ye five precious Wounds, pre-eminent tokens of surpassing love, full of Divine sweetness, whence the sinner takes good heart, keeping thereby his guilty conscience from driving him to despair! In you is found the medicine of life, fullness of grace, plentiful forgiveness, boundless mercy, the gate which leads to the glory which is in store for us. Whatever pollution I incur,

whatever sins of the flesh I commit, in your five fountains I may wash all away, and may be purified, and made faultless.

I praise and glorify Thee, O Christ, only and beloved Spouse of Holy Church, for that inestimable love, which moved Thee, to redeem my soul, by the covenant of Thy Own Blood, from the chains of Adam's sin, to cleanse it from all its sins, and to endow and adorn it with the merits of Thy Own holiness; that so, made holy by Thy grace, it might be found meet in this life to be joined and united to Thee, and hereafter to be made happy and glorious in the Kingdom of Thy excellent Majesty.

Mark carefully, O faithful soul, and see at what great and notable cost He redeemed Thee, Who, of His own unbought goodness, made thee, at the beginning, to His own image and likeness. For thou wast not redeemed from the guilt of original sin, nor from the many actual sins which, by the exercise of thy own free will, thou hast wickedly added thereto, with contemptible things, as gold or silver, but with the precious Blood of Christ, as of a Lamb unspotted and undefiled. And not only upon the Cross, for thy cleansing, did He shed His Blood; but He also vouchsafed to leave the same in the Chalice for thee to drink with faithful devotion in the Communion of that Sacrament, by which the daily sins of the world are purged and blotted out.

Alas! of what terrible punishment will he be thought worthy, who shall have accounted the Blood of the Covenant of the Son of God an unholy thing, and shall not have paid the debt of thanksgiving which he owes to the Wounds of the Crucified. Be careful, then, to render thanks to Him Who has so loved thee, to Him Who has wrought for thee this His inestimable benefit, by at least one short prayer, or one devout meditation, at some time, either of the day, or night. Many faithful souls, burning with love for Him, have rejoiced to shed their blood for Him: and yet more, taking part in His sufferings by using the rough ways of penance, have, for the Chalice of His Blood, humbly offered the waters of a bitter contrition.

Learn thou from their example to crucify thy flesh with its affections and lusts, manfully to resist temptation, and to bear until death the yoke of willing obedience; to offer to Christ thy Redeemer, upon the altar of thy heart, in place of a martyrdom of blood, the sacrifice of a troubled spirit. Seek by diligent meditation to keep ever before thee the benefits purchased

for thee by the Cross, and to find in the deep wounds of Jesus, as in the clefts of a rock, a hiding-place from the face of the enemy and the avenger.

Come to my help, O most gentle Jesus, in my every need, in every crisis of the strife. Stretch forth over me Thy hands, and with Thy right arm ever protect me; put devotion in my heart, truth in my mouth, energy in my work. Purge me from all the corruption of my sins, heal my wounds with Thy precious Blood. Let no hidden thing of darkness, nothing impure, nothing that defiles, remain in me; but may Thy sacred Blood, so abundantly shed, thoroughly cleanse me from all that is hurtful, and sanctify me wholly; that so, when, at the last day, Thou shalt come in Judgement, my spirit, and my soul, for the deliverance of which Thou didst endure so many and such grievous pains, and didst expend such boundless treasure, may be presented before Thee pure and undefiled.

CHAPTER XX

Of the tender pleading of Jesus for His enemies

I BLESS Thee, and give thanks to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, Fountain of love and sweetness, for Thy most perfect charity, and most devoted prayer on behalf of Thy enemies, and of those who were crucifying Thee. With Thy hands stretched out upon the cross Thou didst plead for them, imploring pardon for them, and making loving excuses for them, in the words: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do”—words so full of sweetness and of love that they might well have softened the heart of the most hardened of sinners, and have led him to repent. O most sweet Jesus, how ready art Thou to forgive, how easily art Thou appeased, how plenteous art Thou in mercy! How vast, O my Lord, must be the stores of Thy tender mercies towards those who love Thee, when Thou couldst show forth such loving kindness towards Thy savage enemies; when, raised aloft upon Thy cross, Thou wast not moved to anger against Thy crucifiers, and didst not seek to be revenged upon Thy tormentors, didst not pray that the earth might swallow up alive those wicked men, or that fire from heaven might consume them in a moment; but didst shed forth upon Thy cruel enemies, like healing dew from Heaven, the words: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” In this was manifested Thy most excellent charity and Thy unspeakable tenderness, which nothing could overcome, nothing could hold back from loving intercession. They were crying out: “Crucify Him, crucify Him!” and Thou sayest: “Father, forgive them.” They pierced Thee with hard nails, and Thou makest excuses for their foul iniquities, in the words: “For they know not what they do.” O Christ, how wondrous is Thy love!

But alas for the obstinacy of the stiff-necked people, whose hearts were not touched by words so full of love. Thou didst feel more anguish on account of the blindness of their malice, than on account of the wrong which was being done to Thee: and the working of so great wickedness caused Thee more pain than the torture of all the wounds which had been inflicted on Thee. They did Thee all the harm they could; and Thou didst repay them by doing for them Thy best. The best and most loving thing Thou couldst do for men so wicked, was to pray that they might be turned from their evil ways, and might confess that Thou, the Son of God, hadst truly come in the flesh. And thus were fulfilled those memorable words of Isaias, which of old he had spoken concerning Thee: “And He bath borne the sins of many, and bath prayed for the transgressors,” that they may not perish.

When to those who crucified the Pardon-Giver so great loving-kindness was shown, who can despair of the forgiveness of his sins? Cease, then, O my soul, to despair, self-accused though thou be of so many sins. Entangled as thou art in the snares of so many evil lusts, assailed as thou art by so many temptations, thou hast still, unhappy one, the hope of life: bowels of mercies yearn for thee—of this the Cross, the Nails, the Lance, all the blood-stained Wounds of Jesus are witnesses. Hide thyself, O my soul, hide thyself within the deep Wounds of the Crucified, kiss the wales of His Stripes, clasp with loving arms the Tree of life, hold fast to that most sure pledge of thy Salvation, Jesus hanging on the Cross. Devoutly adore Him, commit thyself to Him in full assurance of faith, put thyself wholly into His hands; for He, Who so abounded in love to those who hated Him, will surely be yet more gracious to thee, when thou art sorrowing for thy sins.

But if thou wouldst be heard speedily, if thou wouldst find grace at the hands of thy Redeemer, and wouldst obtain mercy from Him in all its fullness, thou too must, from the bottom of thy heart, forgive thy brother his trespasses against thee. Forgive him the few small matters in which he has offended thee, that God may forgive thee thy many sins against Him; and pray for his salvation as much as for thy own: so doing, thou shalt find grace; and, by imitating the example of Jesus, Who bade us love our enemies, and pray for them that persecute us, thou shalt become a child of the Most High. If, when suffering unjustly, thou wilt school thyself to forgive the wrong done thee, and wilt lovingly pray for those who have

trespassed against thee, thou shalt lay up for thyself, against the hour of thy death, a store of sure and certain hope. It was this holy prayer which won for the apostles the blessedness of Heaven, which gave to martyrs their crown, which made Confessors renowned, which adorned Virgins, and made all the Saints Christ-like and meet for everlasting life.

O most gracious Lord Jesus, Who of Thy infinite love didst vouchsafe to pray for Thy enemies, vouchsafe, I beseech Thee, in the same spirit of charity, to pray the Father for me, that He will grant me full pardon for all my sins, and will of His great mercy deliver me from the punishments which they have deserved. Grant that I may have a perfect and unwavering trust in Thy love and mercy, and that I may not give way to despair on account of the greatness of my sins; but may remember, in the full assurance of faith, that Thou camest into the world to save sinners, and didst will to suffer, to be crucified, and to die, for the ungodly. May, then, that prayer for Thy enemies, which, in fulfilment of this Thy blessed purpose, Thou didst pray upon Thy Cross, bear fruit to the salvation of my soul; and grant to me, I pray Thee, a sure hope of obtaining pardon through it; that so I may be found meet to obtain, through Thy most holy intercession, that which by my own merits I could never hope to win. Grant me boldly and fearlessly to seek refuge under the shadow of Thy wings, and to be kept by the invincible sign of Thy Holy Cross from all fear of the old enemy. As I haste to lay hold upon Thy Cross, spread over me, I beseech Thee, the shelter of Thine arms; that so, whenever my last hour shall come, my helpless and sorrowing soul may neither be afraid nor despair; and take, I pray Thee, to Thyself, me, a miserable sinner, trusting not at all to my own works, but solely to Thy great mercy.

CHAPTER XXI

Of the plundering, and the sharing, of the garments of Christ

I BLESS Thee, and give thanks to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, Maker of all things, and Giver of all good things, for the rude plundering and the mocking partition of Thy garments; when, as soon as Thou hadst been cruelly nailed to Thy Cross, Thou wast savagely despoiled of all Thy clothing, and wast driven forth disinherited even to the last farthing; so that there was not left Thee even a stitch of clothing wherewith to cover Thy nakedness, nor even a piece of linen for a shroud, in which after Thy death Thou mightest be wrapped, and be decently laid in Thy grave. If Thou art not to go to Thy grave naked, a winding-sheet will have to be obtained for Thee from strangers, and will have to be given as an act of kindness to one utterly poor and destitute. How hungry was the covetousness of those soldiers—soldiers indeed, nay rather low vagabonds! How shameless was the rapacity of those base men of the guard set over Him, who in their unholy greed were not ashamed of despoiling Jesus of His scraps of worldly goods; but sated, as best they might, their thirst for gain by making the meagre garments of the Crucified their prey! Having taken His garments, they made of them four parts, to every soldier a part, leaving entire the coat only, because it had no seam; and for it they cast lots, because they could not share it otherwise without wasting it. Alas for the wickedness of those robbers! Alas for the spite of those extortioners, who had not even so much pity for Jesus hanging on the Cross, poor and naked, as to give Him back some little thing, or to leave even a shred of one of His garments for His sorrowing Mother to keep as a remembrance of Him Whom she had lost!

Not one of these things did they, because, urged on by the Devil, they were working out their sacrilege, without thought of a judgement to come.

O my most dearly loved Jesus, neither by word, nor by deed, dost Thou offer any opposition to all this: Thou dost endure it all in silence; and surely, in thus bearing the loss of all that belonged to Thee, Thou makest it plain to me what I ought to do when anything which I think needful for me is taken from me; for it is Thy Will that I should show myself more ready to bear the loss of worldly goods, than to claim things which belong to me of right. Thy garments were not, as I suppose, elegantly made, nor of brightly coloured stuffs, but rather plain and simple, such as poor folk would wear; or were, may be, made after the fashion of the clothing of the Nazarites or of the prophets of old; doubtless they were not the dainty work of a cunning tailor, but rather were woven and put together by the hands and the needle of the Holy Virgin, with skill inspired by the Holy Ghost; or were, may be, bought, during His childhood, for the use of her Son, by the Virgin Mother, with money earned by her by work done for her neighbours. To think of the Supreme Creator of Heaven, true God, and true Man, reduced to such straits as this! At His birth he had scarcely a few poor rags to cover Him, and now at His death, He has no clothes at all! Then a narrow manger held His infant limbs; now deprived of all His worldly goods, He has, in all the world which He created, no place to lay His Head except His Cross; for as He came into the world poor and needy, so now He willed to leave it naked and an outcast. At His birth He was tightly wrapped in swaddling-clothes; at His death He is pierced by lance and nails. The thought of so great misery calls surely for compassion; the showing forth of so great patience calls surely for imitation. Be thou, then, more patient than ever before, when things that seem needful to thee are taken from thee, or when things upon which thou hast set thy heart are denied thee. Learn to do with little, and to be content with what is mean and poor; so shalt thou be kept from grumbling, and shalt have peace in thyself, and favour with Almighty God.

O that I could possess, or could devoutly touch or kiss, even one small piece of those sacred garments of Jesus, my Lord, from whence so often went out such great virtue that the sick were healed thereby! How holy are the relics of those garments, and in what veneration should they be held, wherever they are to be found! Truly, if those soldiers had but known their worth, they would never, in their greed, have cut them up, or sold them for

some mere trifle; but rather would most carefully, and with due reverence, have preserved them in caskets of silver; for they were indeed more precious than all the royal mantles of kings, and all the robes of bishops, nor has any metal been found so precious as to deserve to be compared with them. But their sanctity and high distinction were hidden from those ungodly men, whose anxiety to satisfy their greedy thirst for gain, made them unable to perceive the fragrance of their holiness. Alas! How sad it is to think that so noble a jewel should have been broken up, and rent asunder by men who cast lots for it. It seems to me that if some rich and powerful follower of Christ had been there at the time, he would willingly, for the redeeming of those holy relics, have offered a great sum of money; or would at any rate have secured some part of them; and having thus acquired a treasure of untold value, would have gone home rejoicing.

And now, O most sweet Jesus, patient endurer of so many wrongs, grant that, to the increase of Thy praise and glory, I may be able, by pious meditation, in some measure to undo the tangle which those soldiers, by way of causing Thee distress, set themselves to weave. Blessed be the holy and spotless garment, with which Thy virginal Body, born of Mary the Virgin, was for many years becomingly clothed. Blessed be the hem of Thy garment, on touching which all who had need of healing, and came to Thee in devout faith, were, as we read, at once made whole. Blessed be Thy coat, woven without seam, that should never have been used by man, but should have been kept for God's holy service only.

For it ought to have been kept intact, not only on account of the special reverence due to it, but also as a symbol of the unity of Holy Mother Church throughout the world. She indeed, although divided by countries, nations, and languages, and although she has within her fold men of different ranks and stations of life, yet lives, and is governed and sustained under one head, and one chief pastor, as one whole body of the Church, keeping one faith, acknowledging one baptism, believing in God, One in Undivided Trinity; having one Spouse, Jesus Christ, reigning in Heaven, from Whose Side no temptations of whatever kind can separate her: for Thou, O Lord, hast indeed given to Thy Bride, the Catholic Church, an impregnable shield against all error—the word of truth, the light of knowledge, and the fervour of charity—that so she may obtain the crown of everlasting life which fadeth not away.

O Jesus, King of kings, at once the richest and the poorest of men, O Lord most poor, as stripped of Thy clothes, and deserted by Thy friends; but at the same time most rich in the fullness of Thy spiritual gifts; grant, I beseech Thee, to me, Thy poor servant, out of the abundance of Thy excellences, to have one at least in its fullness, that, namely, of not being found naked and ashamed before Thee, like the man who was found at the marriage supper not having on a wedding garment, and was presently, for this defect, cast out from the company of the Saints. May my heart be torn to pieces by a wholesome sorrow for sin, in remembrance of the tearing of Thy garment into four parts, so that by one at least out of four motives I may be moved to repentance; by fear of Hell, by hope of future glory, by sorrow for past sin, or by thankful love for grace given me. Give me also that of which Thy seamless coat is the symbol—the unity, namely, of brotherly love in the bond of peace, that so I may get rid of everything which may lead to dissension; may shun the hubbub of the world; may, for love of inward peace, abstain from foolish talk and speculation; may rejoice to lead a poor and hidden life with Thee; and may have no hankering after this world's pleasures. May I not be anxious to have anything of my own; since Thou, when on earth, hadst no worldly goods, and the little that Thou thoughtest fit to use for Thy actual need, that even Thou didst allow robbers to take from Thee, and to waste; thus setting to all those who are suffering wrong, an example of patience, that so they may not regret overmuch the loss of what belongs to them.

CHAPTER XXII

Of the revilings of the Jews, and the strong perseverance of Jesus on the Cross

I BLESS Thee, and give thanks to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, Who art the Glory and the Crown of Rejoicing of the Citizens of Heaven, for all the reproaches and blasphemies hurled at Thee by the perfidious Jews, as Thou hangedst on Thy Cross. From the least of them to the greatest they took part against Thee, and came running together like mad dogs to devour Thy innocency. Like dogs they barked at Thee with their mouths, like lions they gnashed upon Thee with their teeth, like snakes they hissed at Thee with their tongues. With their lips they cursed Thee, with their faces they mocked Thee; they clapped with their hands, they danced with their feet, they rejoiced in their hearts; because they had before them, hanging on the Cross, Thee, Whom they would not willingly let die without being harassed and insulted. Those, therefore, who passed by shook their heads, like frantic and drunken men, full of the gall of bitterness and the poison of ill-will, crying out: “Wah! There is the man that destroys the temple of God, and in three days builds it up again!”

Moreover the Chief Priests with the Elders and the Scribes, who were by way of being the rulers of the people, and ought to have restrained their malice, were worse than the others in deriding Thee; for, with glaring eyes, and stretched out necks, they stood over against the Cross, casting up at Thee impudent glances; and, jesting one with another, poured forth their shameful blasphemies, saying: “He saved others; Himself He cannot save.” Thus did they strive to misrepresent and to disparage the wonders which Thou hadst divinely wrought, and the gifts of healing, which Thou hadst so mercifully dispensed, but of which they were known to be envious. They

suggest therefore that Thou shouldst come down from the Cross, falsely pretending that they, who had so often shown themselves the enemies of true believers, would then believe in Thee. When Thou didst work yet greater miracles than this, they piled up false accusations against Thee, instead of believing in them: clearly, therefore, what they now wanted was, not to believe, nor to seek for Salvation, but to provoke Thee by their malice. And so, at length, brimming over with presumptuous insolence, they flung at Thy Divine Nature impious words; and, addressing Thee as the Son of God, they said: “He trusted in God: let Him now deliver Him, if He will have Him: for He said: I am the Son of God.”

O most cruel and most savage persecutors of the Son of God, why were ye not content with perpetrating the horrible crime of the Crucifixion? Why must ye add to your sins that of blaspheming and deriding the Son of God? Alas! Alas! what do ye? Why sharpen your venomous tongues upon One so loving and so spotless? Wherein has He sinned; or in what has Christ at any time done you harm? Has He not done all things well, Who hath made both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak? Has He not made your whole land famous by many excellent miracles, and by His doctrine full of sweetness and grace? Did He not pray even for His enemies? What evil recompense did He deserve for all these things? Why do ye return evil for good, and hatred for love? Fitter were it that, by way of expiating so great wickedness, ye should have shed tears, than that ye should laugh in the face of the Crucified. But alas, ye know not, neither do ye care. In stubborn hearts there is found no place for compassion, nor for contrition, nor for thought of benefits received; nay rather a devilish madness, breaking out in yet more bitter taunts and insults, ever urges such men on to more atrocious crimes. Being no longer able to wreak their vengeance by means of swords and clubs, they set to work to use the even sharper weapons of their tongues.

And now, in the same way, the soldiers, to whom was committed the execution of the cruel sentence, proud of the work assigned them, knowing nothing of the Law of God, and made worse by the attentions and the encouragement of the Rulers of the people, go nearer to the Cross, and in mockery offer vinegar to the Crucified, saying: “If Thou be the King of the Jews, save Thyself!” Ye stupid soldiers, base in your manners and in your deeds, who has taught you so to fight that ye should war against God? It is not the work of gallant men to persecute One Who is holy, One Who is

poor; to leave naked One Who has been robbed, to tear His garments in pieces, to mock the Crucified, to offer vinegar (which no man likes to drink) to God Who is about to die. Nevertheless ye cannot harm Christ: for wisdom overcomes malice, and the patience of Jesus no insults can exhaust.

The thief, too, who hung on the left hand, and remained impenitent in his sin, joined in these reproaches, saying: "If Thou be Christ, save Thyself, and us." That unhappy man, alas, treats Thee with contempt, and plunges into an abyss of horrors. Instead of praying, as he should, for forgiveness of his evil deeds, he insulted Thee, the Bestower of pardon. And so, the wretched man met his death in despair, and perished miserably.

I praise and glorify Thee for Thy unflinching steadfastness in clinging to the Cross to which Thou hadst submitted Thyself, and from which no revilings, no specious suggestions, could move Thee to descend—not even for one short moment wouldst Thou leave that Cross upon which, of Thy Own free will, Thou hadst been raised on high. It was Thy will there to abide to the end, where of Thy exceeding love Thou hadst placed Thyself; there to remain and to die, and there to consummate, in a way fitted to accomplish Thy purpose, the work which for our sakes Thou hadst begun. Thou Who didst teach men to persevere in every good work, didst Thyself upon the Cross first make profession of obedience, and didst affirm Thy precept by leaving to Thy followers Thy own example.

Come near now to the Tree of the Crucified, thou who art a despiser of the world, a lover of the Holy Cross, and professed in Religion. Play the man, and hold fast to the holy purpose thou hast laid down for thyself. To hold fast thy rule, to live under obedience, and to persevere in discipline is work for Christ, and the perfecting of thy salvation. Therefore let no one prevail on thee to give up life in religion (the way of perfection), to cease to love the religious life, to be false to the vow made at thy Profession. Remember always the Apostle's words: "Christ became for us obedient unto death, even to the death of the Cross." Whatever therefore the world may promise, however the flesh may allure thee, however sorely the devil may tempt thee, however much thy friends may seek to dissuade thee, however much men of the world may laugh at thee, turn not thou aside, take no heed, throw scorn upon it all. Stand fast in Christ, look upwards, raise thy eyes to the Crucified, Who invites thee with outstretched arms, and promises thee in return for thy brief toil an everlasting reward. "If," He

says, “thou wilt suffer with Me, thou shalt reign with Me; and if thou wilt die with Me, with Me shalt thou be glorified.”

O Jesus Christ, most brave and most powerful Champion, most fervent Lover, and Consecrator of the Holy Cross, grant, I pray Thee, that I, who have taken upon me life in Religion, may ever serve Thee with cheerful steadfastness, and may never allow the irksomeness of duties assigned to me to quench the fervour of my loving zeal; but may always press onwards to the things that are before, and may bravely resist the temptations of the flesh, and the assaults of the enemy of my soul. Grant that I may ever be patient in adversity, and may not fear the taunts of men, nor seek to win their praise; that I may turn away my eyes from the things of this life, and may look for all my comfort to Thee, my only Saviour. Grant that I may never shun the embrace of the Blessed Cross on account of any man’s favour or displeasure; but under its protection, and with it for my banner and device, may bring to a happy end a life of willing obedience.

CHAPTER XXIII

Of the Word spoken on the Cross to the thief

I BLESS Thee, and give thanks to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, chief and only Comfort of sinners, for the boundless love and exceeding mercy, which Thou didst vouchsafe to show to him who hung at Thy right hand upon his cross. He had been a most wicked thief, but was now at length converted, and a true penitent. As soon as he acknowledged his sinfulness, and was truly sorry for his evil deeds, he obtained, by Thy sure promise, remission of all his sins, and entrance into Paradise; for when a man's contrition is true, and his conversion complete, his repentance, however late it may be, will not fail of its reward.

How blessed and life-giving are the conversion and contrition of sinners, by which, without delay, a man may win a place in the Kingdom of Heaven! That penitent, who had been a thief, but was now a blessed Confessor, although he had long and grievously sinned, yet at last, and in the hour of his greatest need, came to himself; and grieving with heartfelt sorrow for all that he had done, humbly sought forgiveness, and obtained full pardon. For when he owned that he was justly condemned to death, he admitted that he had been guilty. He had a zeal for righteousness, when he reproved his comrade at his side for the wickedness of his blasphemy. He shows that his heart is in its right place, when he laments that Christ, Who is altogether free from guilt, has been unjustly condemned. He had great faith; for he did not despair of obtaining mercy from Christ; but asked to be remembered by Him in the Kingdom of God: and so, being full of the gifts of grace, he appealed, in the full assurance of faith, to Thee, O Lord Jesus, Whom he owned as the loving Shepherd of souls, the true Priest, and the Confessor of all confessors the most faithful; and having in his mind's eye the whole course of his life, he said: "Lord, remember me when Thou shalt

come into Thy Kingdom.” And Thou, O most gracious Jesus, didst answer him in those most sweet and most comforting words: “Amen, I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with Me in paradise.”

O words sweet indeed, and altogether lovely, laden with encouragement from the Mouth of God, bringing joy to the heart of the contrite sinner in his agony, and overflowing with comfort for one who was in such anxiety and distress. With what a sense of safety can he now die, to whom it has been given to hear such a promise! He shall have no fear in the evil day, whom the Lord Jesus has promised to uphold. To this thief, confessing the Lord Jesus, is granted that which was refused to Peter, entreating Him. Peter wished to set up tabernacles on the Mount of the Transfiguration, but his request was not granted; and when the hour of the Passion was at hand, and Peter wished to be with the Lord through it all, he was told: “Thou canst not follow Me now, but thou shalt follow Me hereafter.” To the Apostle-ship Peter was the first to be called; but in entering the Kingdom the thief went before him. How marvellous, O Lord, are Thy works! Thy thoughts are exceeding deep. How unfathomable are Thy judgements, and how past finding out are Thy words! An unwise man will not well consider, and a fool will not understand these things. How blessed was the opportunity of this robber, who was permitted to suffer with Thee, to die with Thee, and with Thee to enter Thy Kingdom. I know not what good he had before this done in all his life; but of this I am sure, that when its end came he got rid of all his evil deeds by his humble confession. How boundless, then, was the mercy by which one so steeped in guilt had no sooner made to Thee his humble prayer: “Lord, remember me when Thou shalt come into Thy Kingdom,” than all was forgiven him! Thou, O Lord, merciful and gracious, gavest ear at once to the penitent, and didst comfort the soul of him who had confessed his sin with the gracious answer: “Amen, I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with Me in paradise.”

How comforting and wholesome a thing is it for me thoughtfully to consider the circumstances of this thief’s death, and of Thy most sweet answer to his prayer; not in order that I may be more fearless in sinning, or may put off amendment longer than I should; but that, from the fact of a man, who had been such an evil-doer, being so suddenly converted, being made an heir, by Thy merciful grace, of everlasting life, and restored to Paradise, I may learn, when suddenly overcome by temptation, that I need

not despair. I should indeed, O Lord, be sorely troubled on account of my many sins, did I not know of Thy mercies, had I not heard of cases of penitents most graciously taken back into Thy favour. It is Thou Who by the mouth of Thy Prophet didst say: “I would not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should be converted and live”: and again by Thy own mouth: “God so loved the world as to give His only-begotten Son; that whosoever believeth in Him, may not perish, but may have life everlasting”: and again: “I am not come to call the just, but sinners.” It was Thou Who without delay didst forgive to Mary Magdalene all her sins, as she knelt weeping at Thy Feet. It was Thou Who didst take back into Thy favour Peter, who had thrice denied Thee, when he went out and wept bitterly. It was Thou Who, in Thy mercy, didst heal those who were taken with divers diseases, and, in the abundance of Thy love, didst loose those who were bound with the chain of very grievous sins—witness the woman taken in adultery, whom Thou didst save from the hands of her accusers, who were about to stone her.

O most gracious Jesus, my hope of mercy, and my refuge; Thou Who undertakest for me, and deliverest me from my cruel enemies; be merciful to me, and suffer not my soul to perish, to redeem which Thou wast content to endure the shameful death of the Cross. Remember Thy sacred words spoken to the thief, by which to me also Thou hast left a hope so firm that it can never be shaken. Say, then, to my soul, O Saviour of my life, when the hour of my departure shall draw nigh: “This day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise.” What more joyful words could a dying man hear, in what sweeter sounds could his senses be steeped, than those of that answer of good comfort: “This day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise”? Remember me, O Lord, in Thy Kingdom; forsake me not in the awful hour of death, when my strength is failing, when my voice is a mere whisper, when my sight is almost gone, when my ears are almost deaf. Then, O my good Jesus, haste Thee to help me, and send Thy holy angels to comfort me in my agony, that the cruel enemy, who lies in wait for us at our last hour, may not prevail against me. He even dared to look for some weak point in Thee, that might be open to his attack; but finding none, he was utterly confounded, and departed from Thee. So let them be confounded that seek after my soul to destroy it, let them be turned backward and be put to shame suddenly. But let my soul be joyful in Thee, and rejoice in Thy Salvation, O Lord,

meditating on Thy gracious second Word from the Cross: “Amen I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise.” May those words, made sweeter by the thought that Thou didst speak them from Thy Cross, be often on my lips, and more often still in my heart. Words coming from the lips of my Lord as He hung upon the Cross, have a more grateful sweetness, and a fuller power, than any others, and call therefore for more thoughtful attention, more anxious meditation. Oh that I may have grace so to live; Oh that I may strive so to serve my Lord, that when the hour of my departure from the body shall come, I may be found worthy to hear that most sweet word spoken from on high: “This day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise”! And Oh that Thou wouldst also speak to Thy poor servant those other most joyful words: “Well done, thou good servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.” For at that hour nothing can profit more, nothing bring more joy, than to have led a good life, and to have served Thee faithfully until death.

CHAPTER XXIV

Of the illustrious title of the Name of Jesus set up above His Head upon the Cross

I BLESS Thee, and give thanks to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, Prince of Almighty Power, and King of every creature, for the illustrious title of Thy Holy and Blessed Name, openly displayed above Thy Head. It was carefully written, by Pilate the Governor, in the three most renowned languages of the world, in letters of Hebrew and Greek and Latin, in this form, and in these words: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS.

O title in very truth illustrious, not the creature of man's ingenuity, but rather of Divine ordinance, foreseen, and dictated by God, from all eternity. Pilate, indeed, could not, and ought not, to have written otherwise than as he was inspired by Thee to write; and so it is that the mystic sense of this title is found in the famous scriptures of the prophets expressed in their own words. What, therefore, the sacred page had long before predicted, what clear tradition had handed down along the ages, in praise of Thy life-giving Name, that the heathen Governor, inspired by God, wrote upon a small tablet, as an everlasting memorial of the Crucified, in these words: "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews." When, therefore, many of the Jews had read this title, the priests, in the fury of their ill-will, could not bear that the glory of Thy Name, which they had been struggling with all their might to obscure, and—which was yet more senseless—to wipe out at the same time as Thy life, should be thus proclaimed to the world: and so they came to Pilate the Governor with their complaints as to the honour needlessly conferred by such a title, saying: "Write not, the King of the Jews; but that He said: I am the King of the Jews." For they feared that they would be

confounded, and that their wicked cruelty in having crucified their King would be laid to their charge; and to prevent this being any longer spread abroad, they asked to have the title changed, so that Jesus might not appear to have been crucified on account of their malice; but that He might rather seem to have been condemned as a pretender to a throne, and because He Who had never in this world exercised any royal authority, had dared to say that He was a King.

O ye Jews, most impious of men, the fact is not as ye would make it out to be; but it is ye yourselves who are guilty of all this, it is ye who are the ringleaders in the killing of the Son of God. Ye are without excuse, try with all the artful cunning that ye may to cover up your grievous crime; for, before Pilate, ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you: and now ye have come to this, that ye would fain get rid of the truth of this title, and make yourselves out to be guiltless. But Pilate, who, in condemning the Lord to death, was much less guilty than yourselves, and in writing the title was more truthful, in his answer to your envious appeal showed himself to be also more consistent; for he said: “What I have written, I have written.” It was as if he had said: “Read it, or not, as you please, but do not think to turn me from my purpose: what I have written I have written: I did not take your advice as to the title I should write; nor will I change what I have written because you wish it: it will remain as I have set it out: God inspired it, not man: I affirm it, therefore, and maintain its truth: nor will I be prevailed upon by any one to alter it: to all people and languages I declare His dignity and order Him to be proclaimed, Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.” O brave Governor, thy inscription was very good, and thy answer to those priests was just. I praise thee for having framed so holy and beautiful a title for the Cross of Jesus of Nazareth, and for having so boldly put the Jews to silence: but in this I praise thee not, that thou didst consent to the death of Christ—in so doing thou didst grievously sin.

And be thou also careful, O faithful disciple of Jesus, discreetly to think over the words of this sacred title, to read them thoughtfully, and to utter them reverently; for to read this title, “Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews,” is a very strong protection against fear of the enemy. Make the sign of the Holy Cross, sign thyself with it on thy forehead and on thy breast, and then read devoutly the words of this title; and in place of anxiety and distress,

thou shalt perceive in thyself such help as will leave its mark on thee: for if thou invoke the saving Name of Jesus by using the words, “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews,” the power of Christ, and a sure trust in God, will not suffer thee to be exposed to danger. The full sweetness of this most illustrious title no words can express, no mind can adequately grasp. The words are but four in number; and yet do they invite the whole world to give honour to the Holy Name. All ye princes of the world, therefore, all ye nations and people, give ear to them, read them and say: “Hail, Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews, Who didst suffer for the Salvation of all men.”

O Jesus of Nazareth, bright flower of the Virgin Mary; O illustrious Son of David, the Only-Begotten of the Supreme Father, write, I pray Thee, with a strong and clear hand, upon the tablets of my heart, Thy sweet and glorious Name, along with that sacred and brightly-shining Title of Thy Passion, which declared the cause of Thy death; that so I may keep it ever before my eyes, and may often read it to the praise of Thy Most Holy Name. May that Title be the comfort of my heart in distress, may it be my special protection when temptations assail me; may the evil spirit depart from me; may the lust of concupiscence die out within me; may the whole world have a bitter taste to me, when I think, or read, of “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.” For of a truth nothing is more sweet than Jesus, nothing more wholesome, nothing more helpful; nothing can be brighter, nothing more pure, nothing more holy than the Nazarene; nothing can be more worthy of honour than the King of the Jews, nothing more powerful, nothing more exalted. Therefore let no enemy think to withstand me; let no plague think to touch me; let no calamity think to crush me, so long as I humbly invoke Thy aid, O my Jesus, or call to mind Thy Passion, or dwell with heart and lips upon Thy Title “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.”

O Jesus, above all else deserving of my love, Thou art my King and my God, dear to me above everything, far above all the praise that I can give Thee. Dear to me wert Thou in the Manger, still dearer wert Thou on the Cross; dearest of all art Thou when sitting upon the Throne of Thy Kingdom; for though, in the weakness of Thy flesh, Thou didst hang upon the Cross, yet now by the Power of God, Thou livest, and art sitting at the Right Hand of the Father, exalted above every creature for ever and ever. Amen.

CHAPTER XXV

Of the suffering of the Lord with His Mother's grief, and His commendation the one to the other of Blessed Mary and St. John

I BLESS Thee, and give thanks to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, Comforter of all that mourn, for the sorrowful glance which, in Thy mercy, Thou didst cast upon Thy dearly-loved Mother as she stood beneath Thy Cross, worn out with the intensity of her grief. How intense that grief was, Thou alone best knew, from Whom the most secret motions of her heart were not hid; for, upon earth, there was nothing more dear to Thee than Thy Virgin Mother; and she loved nothing so much as Thee, her God and her Son, Whom, although Thou wert the Fruit of her womb, she knew, without doubt, to be her Maker and the Lord of all things. When, therefore, she saw Thee, Whom she loved above all else, hanging upon the Cross, her heart was in Thee, rather than in herself; and being lifted, as it were, outside herself, she will, in spirit, have hung with Thee upon the Cross, even when, in the body, she was standing weeping at its foot.

I praise and glorify Thee for the exceeding great compassion with which, as a Son, Thou didst condole with Thy most sorrowful Mother, to whom all Thy anguish was as if it had been her own; who wept over each wound of Thine, as if it had been inflicted upon herself; and whose heart was racked with fresh pain as often as, with a mother's eye, she saw blood flowing from Thy Body, or heard Thy voice as Thou spakest to her from the Cross.

I laud and magnify Thee for those most gracious words, few in number though they were, which Thou didst at length speak to Thy disconsolate Mother, when Thou didst commend her to Thy well-beloved disciple John,

as to a most faithful steward, and didst bring together in an indissoluble bond of love the Virgin and him who was vowed to chastity, saying to her: “Woman, behold thy son,” and then to Thy disciple: “Behold thy mother.”

O happy union, and pleasing commendation, shared and consecrated by virgin purity! For in these words Thou didst on the one hand show forth Thy loving care for Thy Mother’s honour, by giving her the protection of Thy chaste disciple, and on the other hand Thou didst, as it were, supply Thy place to her, by assigning to her another son, who, by the chastity of his life was suited to give her a home, and who might be depended on to provide her with the necessities of life. What Thou didst was what Thy feeling as a son prompted Thee to do, that so the spotless Virgin, who was Thy holy Mother, might always have a faithful attendant; and when deprived of Thy most sweet presence, might never feel as if she were left alone in the world, and as a stranger among the Jews.

May this sacred arrangement, this most fitting commendation by thy Son, be pleasing to thee, O loving Mother of God: welcome thankfully the disciple whom thy Son Jesus has assigned to thee. This is John, the Apostle, chosen as one of unstained life, more beloved than the other apostles, gentle in his manners, kind in his speech, bashful in his looks, modest in his carriage, temperate in his food, homely in his dress, dutiful and obedient: this is the disciple whom thy Son loved, who is related to thee by blood, well spoken of by all, pure in mind, chaste in body, pleasing to God, beloved of all men, fitted in every way to be thy companion, O Mother of God. I know indeed full well, that thy will was, and is, in accordance with thy Son’s will, and that it must always have been thy supreme wish to do what was ordained by Him, Who in all that He did sought not His Own Will, but His Father’s glory; and so I cannot doubt that when, as the hour of His departure was at hand, He left John to supply His place to thee, what He did was pleasing to thee.

Take to thyself, then, holy John, the precious treasure thus made over to thee. Take to thyself the holy Virgin, the Mother of Jesus, worthy of all reverence, the Queen of Heaven, the Mistress of the World, thy own beloved aunt, thy mother’s sister. Till now the Blessed Virgin Mary has been called thy aunt by right of blood; henceforth, by special grace entrusted to thy care, she shall be called thy mother, by a more sacred title, that is by right Divine: and thou too, who hast hitherto been known as the

son of Zebedee, according to the flesh, as the brother of James the Greater, as the kinsman of thy Lord and Saviour, and afterwards as his disciple, shalt now receive the new name of Mary's adopted son; and shalt minister to her with the love of a son, over and above that love of a nephew which thou always hadst for her. Do then as Christ bids thee; fulfil the holy commendatory injunction, and thou shalt be well-pleasing to all men, and honoured throughout the world.

Most blessed John did as Jesus had bidden him from the Cross. From that hour the disciple took her to his home, watched over her, carefully ministered to her, most faithfully submitted himself to her, and loved her with his whole heart, as if she had been his own mother.

Be glad and rejoice, O blessed Saint John, in the trust committed to thee: for what in all the world Christ held most dear, that He made over to thy care. He gave thee great wealth, when He bequeathed to thee Mary, whom even the Holy Angels cannot worthily praise. To Saint Peter Christ gave charge of the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, but He made thee His Own Mother's chamberlain. Formerly Mary was betrothed to holy Joseph, but now she is entrusted to thee as to her second guardian. To holy Joseph an Angel had said: "Fear not to take unto thee Mary, thy wife," now it is the Lord of Angels Himself Who says to thee: "Behold thy Mother," in order that, as Joseph was not wanting in his duty to the Virgin at the birth of her Son, so neither shouldst thou fail in thy duty to her, whether at the hour of Christ's Passion, or in the long years that will follow after His Ascension into Heaven. Had indeed most blessed John the Baptist been alive, I should have thought that he, by right of near kinship, and on account of his chaste life, would have been a fitting person to act as guardian, and as the Bridegroom's friend: but since Joseph is no more, it is for thee so supply the place of all those dear ones, and to be to her as a son instead of Christ, Who has been taken from her side. I trust in the Lord Jesus, that thy brother James and the rest of the Apostles will hail with joy this arrangement; that not one of thy friends will be envious of thee, and that every faithful soul will contentedly rejoice with thee.

O blessed Saint John, this high reward was won for thee by thy many virtues, to wit, by thy perfect contempt of the world, thy love for Jesus, the gentleness of thy manners, thy virginal chastity, thy even-mindedness, thy frankness, the purity of thy conscience, and the probity of thy life. Take,

then, the Mother of Christ into thy care, and so doing thou shalt win abundant grace; much profit shalt thou have through her, and high shalt thou rise; for by her words thou shalt be instructed, by her example thou shalt be edified, by her prayers thou shalt be helped, by her admonitions thou shalt be inspirited; thou shalt be inflamed with love; thou shalt rise higher in devotion; thou shalt be lifted up in meditation; thou shalt be filled with joy; thou shalt abound in consolation; thou shalt enjoy the things of heaven: from her lips thou shalt hear Divine mysteries; thou shalt be taught things hidden from the world; thou shalt understand what others can only wonder at; thou shalt comprehend things unspeakable. By dwelling with her, thou shalt become more chaste than before; thou shalt remain altogether pure; thou shalt increase in holiness; thou shalt become more and more devout. Her every glance is modesty itself, her every word prudence, her every act justice, her scripture-reading Jesus, her meditation Christ, her contemplation God. The beauty of her countenance bursts forth as light; her looks, though awe-inspiring, keep no one from approaching her; her refinement brings purity to all who behold her; her words drive away every evil thing. Such, and so great, is the high rank of Mary, that she surpasses all other Saints in purity and grace; and to her shalt thou be as a guardian assigned to her by the Most High King of Heaven Himself. Be, then, diligent in thy attendance on her; pay to her the honour which is her due; watch over her to the best of thy ability. Stand at the foot of the cross; watch by the Virgin's side; when she is worn out support her in thine arms; embrace Mary; when she is fainting, raise her up; when she is bathed in tears, comfort her; weep with her when she weeps; sigh with her when she sighs; go with her when she walks; stand with her when she stands; sit with her when she sits. Leave her not in her grief; do that work of mercy; and then get ready for the burial of Jesus, Who is about to die. Take the Mother with thee to the Sepulchre, bring her back to the city, take her to thy house; comfort her who is the comforter of all who are forlorn. Thou art in this case permitted to be the consoler of one of higher rank than thyself; be then to her as a ministering angel. In His Agony Christ was strengthened by an angel; although He needed it not, yet He willed to be attended by one beneath Him, and He refused not the angelic consolation. Behold, O John, who art so very dear to me, to what holy duties thou art called; of what high

estate that Virgin is who has been commended to thee, and Whose Mother she is who has been entrusted to thy care!

Now, therefore, I humbly beseech thee to pray earnestly for me, a sinner, that I too may be on fire with love for Christ, and may be more devout than ever in praising the Blessed Virgin, and more and more full of compassion for her grief.

CHAPTER XXVI

Of the transcendent virtues of the Blessed Virgin, and of her grief and tears

I BLESS thee, and I praise and glorify thee, O Virgin Mary, holy Mother of God, for all the good gifts abundantly bestowed upon thee by God; for thy virtues without number; and for the very great privileges of grace, by which thou wast so remarkably distinguished above all the Saints upon earth, in being thought worthy to become the Mother of God, to hold in thy lap, to clasp in thy blessed arms, to lift and to carry about, the Word of God, Who of thy substance had taken Flesh.

I bless, and praise, and honour thee, O chosen Mother, and lowly handmaid, of God, for all the loving service, and all the needed help, which thou didst render to Christ, thy Son according to the flesh; for all the persecution and want, and for all the toil and fatigue, which thou didst so uncomplainingly undergo for Him.

I bless, and praise, and venerate thee, O illustrious Mary, Mother and daughter of the Everlasting King, for all the sweet converse which thou so often hadst with Jesus; for all the Divine words to which, as they fell from His Lips, thou didst so discreetly listen, treasuring them up in thy chaste breast, and sweetly meditating upon them in thy heart. I venerate thee for the splendid consolations which thou didst so often receive from Him; for the very great joy and rejoicing of heart which thou didst, so long, and so wistfully, experience from His presence, and from the grace breathed forth upon thee by the Holy Spirit of God.

I bless thee, and I praise and magnify thee, my adorable Lady, Holy Mary, for that most pure and holy life, so pleasing to God and to His Angels, which thou didst so long time live with Jesus in retirement, and in

great poverty; in which thou wast tried by many afflictions and distresses; by which thou didst leave to all faithful servants of Christ an example to be by them devoutly imitated; and by which thou wilt have very greatly profited the universal Church, in the difficulties which she must encounter so long as the world shall last.

I bless thee, and praise and celebrate thee, O Mary, most kind and most devoted Mother of God, for all thy devout exercises and sacred meditations on the law of God by day and by night; for thy most fervent prayers, and tears and fastings, offered with such great earnestness before the Throne of God, for the conversion of sinners and the perseverance of the just; for thy profound compassion for the poor and infirm, for those tempted and in anguish of soul; and for thy consuming thirst for the salvation of the human race, the price of which thou knewest to be the cruel death of thy Son. And although thou didst love thy only Son with love unspeakable, yet didst thou not hold Him back from ascending the dreadful Cross, but didst with all thy heart submit thyself, together with thy Son, to what had been ordained of God. Thou wast ever forward in condoling with Him in all His pain and anguish, and didst bravely follow Him to the foot of the shameful Cross, taking no heed of the flight of His disciples, nor fearing the savagery of the Jews, preferring to go to death with Him, to deserting thy Son at a time of such anguish and distress.

I bless thee, I praise and extol thee, most faithful and loving Mother of God, heavenly Mary, for that constancy in firm faith and perfect love, which thou didst show, when, on the flight of some of the apostles from fear, and when others only followed their Lord, as if ashamed of Him, thou alone, in the Passion of thy Son, didst never cease to keep burning the unquenchable light of faith; nothing doubting that in three days thy Son would rise again, as He, with His Own Lips, had very clearly foretold. For, when all the friends of Jesus had forsaken Him and fled, thou, O most sorrowful Mother, passing through the raging, surging mob, didst, with a humble following of women, hasten to the Hill of Calvary; that so thou mightest be as near as could be to thy Son, about to die upon the Cross; and mightest once more behold alive Him, from Whom, before His death, thou wert about to hear the words of loving committal to Saint John.

I bless thee, I praise and heartily commend thee, O holy and immaculate Virgin Mary, for thy sorrow-stricken presence at the foot of the Cross of

Jesus, where, weary and in anguish, thou didst so long stand, pierced with the sword of grief, as the prophet Simeon had foretold of thee. I praise and heartily commend thee for the many tears which thou didst at that time so freely shed; for the supreme fidelity, and unswerving constancy, which thou didst show to thy dying Son, in His last need; for the anguish of heart which thou didst so acutely feel at the moment of His death; for thy face running down with tears, when thou didst behold Him hanging before thee dead; for that loving embrace with which thou didst take Him into a Mother's arms, and with a wail of lament didst clasp Him to thy bosom; for thy mournful journey to the place of burial, when, in spite of thy excessive grief, thou didst follow the bearers of the sacred corpse, and didst see It placed in the tomb, and enclosed therein by a great stone; for thy sorrowing return from the tomb, and for thy entrance into thy new abode, where, together with the many faithful ones there assembled, thou didst again bitterly mourn the death of the Son of thy love, and from the eyes of them all didst draw forth tears of sympathy with thy grief.

Do thou, then, O my soul, mourn also with the sorrowing Virgin, the weeping Mother, the loving Mary. If thou lovest Mary, thou oughtest to share her sorrow, that so she may come to help thee in thy time of need, See how the loving Mother bewails her only Son, Mary of Cleophas bewails her dearly loved Nephew, Mary Magdalene bewails the Physician of her soul, John bewails his most sweet Master, all the apostles bewail their Lord taken away from their midst. Who would not shed tears when so many shed tears together? Great indeed was that wailing in Jerusalem. Stand thou, then, here a while, and let that Virgin Mother, whose bitter tears cannot fail to stir the inmost recesses of thy heart, teach thee what mourning means. She who is now standing at the Cross's foot, pierced through with grievous sorrow, was only a few short years ago standing by a manger's side, her ears ringing with the music of the heavenly choir; she who is now tormented by the shrieking of the Jews, was but a short while since being comforted by the voices of Angels; she who is now clothed in a garment of mourning was not long ago being venerated by the Holy Kings. The lifeblood of that Son, Whose snow-white cheek was once pressed so fondly to her own, is now falling upon her drop by drop; she beholds, hanging between two thieves, Him Whom she has so often seen working mighty wonders in the midst of the people. She sees, made like to a leper by the loathsomeness of His

Wounds, Him by the touch of Whose Hand she has seen full many a leper cleansed. She has before her eyes, racked with pain of every kind, Him, Who used to heal of every disease those who were sick. She beholds, given over to death, that Son at Whose word dead Lazarus came back to life. All that was pleasant in Him is now turned to sadness, all that was sweet in Him is now turned to bitterness. With such a tempest of evils is the bright-shining Star of the Sea surrounded; but a mind fixed steadfastly upon God is not to be overcome by the wickedness of men. She stands therefore at the Cross's foot, constant, and faithful, patient, and loving; not heeding those who threaten her with death; not shrinking from the insults of those who heap curses upon her. She bears it all calmly, and strives to follow the example of her Son's humility in making no answer to her cruel enemies. Not a harsh word does she speak, not an indignant gesture does she use; but she heaves many a sigh, she weeps bitterly, she is bowed down with sorrow, she suffers with each pang of her dying Son, her affliction is more than she can bear. And yet she is not angry with those who are crucifying her Son, she prays for those who are using Him so despitefully, she is sorry for those who are mocking Him, she pities the blasphemers of Christ. It was thus that the Mother of Jesus, bathed in tears, stood at the foot of the Cross, bringing comfort to all who are in trouble or distress by the example of her meekness and her patience.

O all ye who pass along the Way of Calvary, turn your eyes upon Holy Mary as she stands there in her grief. Look to the right of the Cross, and mark there Mary the Mother of Christ, and say was ever sorrow like her sorrow, was ever in the world a mother who suffered with her son in loving anguish such as hers; for in all the tortured limbs of Jesus she was herself tortured in soul, and she became a martyr every time she looked upon the bleeding wounds of her Son.

See to it then, O faithful soul, that thou lay up in the recesses of thy heart all these things. Be brave and meek when tribulation comes upon thee. Be not disquieted, nor fall into despair, if that which thou dost value most is taken from thee; or if that which thou thinkest to be needful for thee is refused thee; for it is those friends of Jesus, who are most dear to Him, who are wont to be tried the most. If God spared not His Own Son; but delivered Him up for us all to sufferings so grievous, how canst thou in this life seek for happiness? If Christ sought not Himself, but became obedient, and ready

to undergo all that was most vile and painful, why dost thou shrink, as thou dost, from toil and distress, and dost not rather, for the love of the Crucified, cling to things that are hard and displeasing? If He allowed His Own most Holy Mother to be grievously afflicted in this world; if He allowed her to be often in tribulation, to endure great anguish of soul, and to shed many tears, how canst thou expect to live in this world free of worries? And if thou callest to mind all the men who were the friends of God, thou wilt not find one who passed through the waves of this troublesome world without being severely tried. Take then to thyself from Him Who was Crucified for thee, and from His Blessed Mother, an example of unwearied patience; and in return for the infinite yearning of Jesus for thy Salvation, shrink not from enduring some small affliction; that so, when His Glory shall be revealed, thou mayest have the perpetual joy of His Countenance. The most gracious Mother of Jesus knows how to suffer lovingly with those that suffer. From what she herself suffered, she has learnt to be kind and pitiful to those in distress, and she will not forget her poor ones; she will listen to their prayers; she will in due time help those who call upon her; she will show favour to all those who are devoted to her.

O most merciful Lord Jesus, sweet Son of Mary, shed down upon me, I beseech Thee, the grace of holy tears, and pierce my heart with a wound of very deep compassion, such as I know that to have been with which Thy loving Mother's heart was pierced. Look upon me with those Eyes full of pity, with which Thou didst behold Thy Mother and Thy disciple standing in tears at the foot of the Cross, what time Thou didst commend the one to the other, and didst bid them farewell in those touching words: "Behold thy son: behold thy Mother." Visit me, I beseech Thee, with Thy salvation before my death, and make me to hear those words which blessed John heard Thee speak to him from the Cross: "Behold thy mother"; that so, by hearing those words, my soul may be kept safe from fear of the enemy, who goes about like a roaring lion seeking to devour it.

Holy Mary, my most gentle Mistress, most faithful Advocate of all Christians, by all those excellent merits, which made thee so well-pleasing to God; by each of all those motherly services which thou didst so willingly render to thy Son according to the flesh; and by all those bitter tears, which thou didst shed when witnessing His Passion, I beseech thee, to vouchsafe to have pity upon me, thy poor suppliant; to take me, with thy wonted

tenderness, into thy motherly care; and to number me among those of thy servants who are the objects of thy special love.

O glorious Virgin Mary, my only hope, come to me, I pray thee; show me thy face when the hour of my departure is at hand; and gently and sweetly turn upon me those pitying eyes of thine, with which thou didst so often look joyously upon the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus, and which at His Passion were wet with so many tears. Stand then by my side, O most holy Mother of Jesus, with thy sweet virgin train, and the blessed company of all the saints, even as thou didst faithfully persevere to the end in standing by the Cross of thy dearly-loved Son, when He was about to die; for after thy only Son, my Lord Jesus Christ, I know no other who is so powerful, or so ready to help, as thou, most gracious mother of all who are in need of comfort.

CHAPTER XXVII

Of the lonely dereliction of the Lord Jesus on the Cross

I BLESS Thee, and give thanks to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, most loving Son of the Father's Love, for Thy awful and lonely dereliction on the Cross, when, at the moment of Thy direst need, as if Thou hadst been an alien and of no account; as if Thou hadst not been the very Son of God; as if Thou hadst no power or merit of any kind soever, Thou wast forsaken of God the Father, by the host of Heaven, and by every creature upon earth—at which time Thy most sorrowful Mother, attended only by a few poor women and by the disciple to whose care Thou hadst committed her, alone stood by Thee; and she, by reason of the grief and anguish of her soul, could scarce speak to Thee one word.

I praise and glorify Thee for that strong cry which burst from Thy lips, when, in the hearing of all those that stood by, Thou didst utter those woeful words: “Eli, Eli, lamma sabhchthani.” By those words, O my Lord, Thou didst make abundantly plain the intensity of Thy anguish, and the withdrawal from Thee of consolation of every kind. Thou didst declare by them the measure of what Thou wast enduring for the salvation of us men, by whom Thou wast in return being set at nought, nay, rather wast being treated as the vilest of malefactors, and as one quite unworthy to live.

Mark well, O my soul, this Word of Jesus; for it was spoken specially for thy learning. Consider—Oh the wonder of it!—how the Lord of all things, Who has need of nothing, is reduced to such a depth of misery that He tells forth His need into His Father's ears; that He Who orders all things as co-worker with His Father, complains that His Father has forsaken Him; that He Who upholds all things by the word of His Power proclaims the burden

laid upon Him to be too heavy for Him to bear; that He, Who is ever ready to comfort the mourner and the oppressed, confesses Himself to be an outcast and forlorn; that He Who is the Hearer of prayer, Whose Ears are ever open to the cry of the poor, humbly asks the question: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Of a truth, from the beginning of His Passion until now, no words so woeful had yet been spoken.

It was for me, O Christ—I know it well—it was for me that in Thy passible human nature Thou didst utter this cry upon the Cross; for Thy dereliction is my comfort, Thy bitter cry is my support, Thy weakness is my strength; Thy sufferings have paid the penalty for all my sins and shortcomings. Thou art the heavenly Physician; moved by Thy infinite love and compassion, Thou didst submit to be overwhelmed by unfathomable sorrow and anguish: and thus it is that with the weak Thou canst be weak, with the mourner Thou canst mourn, with the sinner Thou canst be sad, with the oppressed Thou canst grieve, and for all Thy weak members Thou canst offer up prayer with strong crying and with tears. Those words which Thou didst utter were not spoken by way of rebellion or of despair: they were the cry of Thy human nature and sensibility. Thy Flesh was suffering the penalty of guilt, of which it had never known the taint. Thy Soul was enjoying the highest bliss; but Thy Body, all innocent as It was, was enduring punishment than which none could be more severe. Thy Divinity brought no relief to Thy anguish; but It worked a miracle in Thy power of endurance, that so for the Redemption of our race nothing might be wanting.

What faithful soul is there, which, after meditating on these things, can help sharing Thy anguish? What heart is there so hard as not to be pierced by that exceeding bitter cry? Even the elements, devoid of feeling as they are, stood unmistakably aghast in sympathy with Thy sufferings; for from the sixth until the ninth hour the sun withdrew his light from the world, refusing to shine upon men who were so unworthy of it; and the earth quaked, shuddering at the insults heaped upon its Creator, grieving over the sufferings which the Author of life had to endure, and exclaiming that it could not bear to see Him die. When therefore the sun mourns, and the earth trembles and quakes, see thou to it, O man endowed with reason, that thou too takest part in their grief; that thou dost fully mark the cry of Jesus, why the cry was uttered, and what it meant. Note how, in all His tribulation

and anguish, the Lord Jesus remained meek and patient, and how all the words which fell from His Lips were words of sweetness and of love. His prayer is addressed to His Father in Heaven; He calls upon God alone; Him alone does He tell of His desolation. He seeks no comfort from His Mother; He asks no help from His friends.

Here, then, is instruction for thee, from the Mouth of Jesus; He shows thee what thou shouldst do when thou art in distress. Art thou suffering from some bodily infirmity; hast thou some mental trouble or unhappiness to bear; art thou looked down upon by others; hast thou lost the favour of men by reason of thy poverty or other defect; be not cast down, be not impatient; but use thy trouble as a stepping-stone in thy spiritual progress, use it as an opportunity for sweet converse with Jesus as He hangs upon the Cross, despised and rejected of men, and with the Father's Face hidden from Him for a season; and meditate upon those words which He spake: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

When thou art feeling weak and ill, try to be patient and gentle; do not grumble if every now and then thy attendants neglect thee, or thy brethren fail to visit thee. Think of Jesus in His desolation upon the Cross, and shrink from complaining of thy petty discomfort; pray Him to visit thee, seek thy consolation from Him, Who is able to comfort thee, even when thou art forsaken and alone. Set no store by the fleeting solace which is all that this world can give; make not too much of the attachment of thy friends; desire rather to have God's angels watching over thee, and call upon the Saints to pray for thee. Lift up thine eyes to Him Who hangs above thee on the Cross; meditate on His Sacred Wounds; pray to the glorious Virgin; keep Mary ever in mind; pray earnestly to her; for she never left the Cross's foot, and she heard Jesus crying with a loud voice to the Father. Close thine eyes to all things earthly, lift up thy soul to thy home which is above. Cling to God as thy Father, to Jesus as thy Brother, to Mary as thy Mother, to the Angels as thy friends, to the Saints as thy kinsfolk. Of that noble and exalted stock thou comest too, not by natural birth, but by the spiritual freedom wherewith Christ has made us free. Surrounded by protectors such as these; with loving patrons such as these ready at thy call, thou mayest in confidence await the coming of the day of doom, and hope for mercy at the hands of thy most loving Saviour.

O supreme and adorable Father of my Lord Jesus Christ, have respect, I entreat Thee, to the prayer which Thy servant now offers to Thee by the hands of Thy Beloved Son, as He hangs upon the Cross; forgive me all the sins which I have at any time committed; withhold not from me the gift of Thy heavenly grace; suffer me not to be tempted above that which I am able to bear, nor to be unduly distressed by the fiery darts of the wicked one. Prove me, O Lord, and try me, as Thou knowest it to be good for me; but keep my soul in Thy Hands, and with every temptation make for me such a way of escape that I may be able to bear it. That which the cunning enemy of my soul has contrived for my hurt, turn Thou, I beseech Thee, into a means of salvation, and of the shedding forth upon me of yet more grace. The more I feel the weight of the trouble which is laid upon me, and the less I am able to put my trust in what man can do for me, the more powerfully and the more closely be Thou at hand to help me; for in the hour of a man's greatest need Thou art of all friends the most true. And if, when trouble is laid upon me, Thou shouldst see fit to leave me for a while without consolation, give me then, I pray Thee, grace to bear even this patiently, and in trusting faith to commit all my burden into Thy Hands; to store up in the deepest recesses of my heart the thought of that time of desolation through which Thy Beloved Son, in Whom Thou art well pleased, had to pass; and to remember that in His extremity, when bereft of the help of all his friends, He was mindful of Thee, and of Thee alone.

CHAPTER XXVIII

Of the thirst of the Lord Jesus as He hung upon the Cross

I BLESS Thee, and give thanks to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, Fountain of living water, and Source of that wisdom that maketh wise unto salvation, for the exceeding great thirst which Thou didst suffer upon the Cross, when, by reason of Thy sacred and precious Blood having been poured forth, and all the natural fluids of Thy Body having been exhausted by Thy grievous tortures, Thou didst—besides Thy burning thirst for our salvation—endure an agony of bodily thirst; and as one utterly poor and needy, didst ask for drink, saying, “I thirst.” But even this small request there was none who would heed; none was there who would even offer a cup of cold water to Him Who made all water to flow. Nay more, some of the bystanders, on hearing what Thou hadst said, were not only not moved to pity, but became yet more unmerciful; and that they might gratify the venomous hatred of their wicked hearts, filled a sponge with vinegar mingled with gall, and put to Thy sweet Mouth that most bitter draught, which was not fit to be given as drink to a dog.

I laud and honour Thee for Thy most gracious self-restraint in accepting and tasting that most nauseous draught, which by way of expiatory penance for the sin of our first parents, Thou didst taste, in order that as the tasting of the forbidden fruit brought death into the world, so Thy tasting of this bitter draught might be to us a healing remedy.

But woe be to thee, thou impious people of the Jews, of all races of men the most stiffnecked and full of wickedness! How couldst thou sink to such a depth of depravity as to release Barabbas and crucify Christ? How couldst thou be brought to such a pitch of madness as to offer vinegar to One Who

asked for a drink to stay His thirst? Put it before the High Priest or the Ruler of thy people, and see if he would drink it. What has Christ done to thee, or wherein has Jesus of Nazareth wronged thee? Answer me, I pray thee. Did not God cause manna to fall from heaven for thee; did not God draw for thee water from the stony rock, that thou mightest eat and drink to the full? And now, in return for the sweet manna that He gave thee, thou offerest Him wine mingled with myrrh; and in return for the abundant water which He gave thee, thou offerest not a drop to Christ, when He is athirst. Even now, did He will it, Christ could make all thy water brackish; and deprived of bread and water thou wouldst soon perish for lack of that, which, asked for pity's sake, thou now refusest to give. If Christ had willed to have not a nauseous but a refreshing draught, how willingly and how swiftly would the angels, who, when His threefold temptation by the evil one was ended, ministered food to Him, have ministered to Him the life-giving dew of Heaven, more refreshing far than all the water upon earth. But He would not assert Himself, or show His power: He willed rather to work a wonder of patience and endurance, that so He might set an example to those who are professed to poverty.

Do thou, then, O disciple of Jesus, drink deeply from this bitter cup as a cure for the indulgence of thy appetites; for if thou wouldst sup with Christ in the Kingdom of His Father, thy heart must not be set upon dainty food, or draughts of costly wine; thou must not long for soft beds or fine clothes. Such things are out of keeping with the spotless life of Jesus, and with His most bitter Passion. Be on thy guard against yielding to the lusts of the flesh; keep thy sensual impulses in check by being moderate in thy food; and if thou shouldst have exceeded by taking too much or too dainty food, then by daily toil and nightly vigil chasten thyself for thy fault, keeping ever sorrowfully in mind the bitter cup of Christ.

O Jesus, Heavenly Manna, and most sweet Nectar, Thou to Whom, when Thou wast grievously athirst in Thy agony on the Cross, vinegar and gall were given to drink, nor would anyone give Thee even a drop of water, by which Thou mightest have been refreshed; grant that at my meals I may be careful to remember this bitter cup of Thine, that so I may not be too anxious about bodily nourishment, but may earnestly apply my mind to the holy words which are being read. May I learn to take only so much food as is needful for me; may I take it in Thy fear, and may I devoutly thank Thee

for all Thy benefits bestowed upon me. May I be content, and that not grudgingly, with the food set before me, no matter how scanty or uninviting it may be: nay more, may I feel myself unworthy of even the poorest scraps, and shrink from living in idleness at the cost of other men's labours. Grant that I may hunger after the meat that perisheth not, but endureth unto everlasting life. Grant that I may thirst after the fountain of life eternal, and that I may from time to time be fed with a crumb of that living bread which is set before those who eat at Thy Table in Heaven, and may be allowed to taste, be it ever so little, of its inward savour; that so I may be able experimentally to understand how refreshing is that Spirit, O Lord, which Thou as a free gift dost shed forth upon the children of grace.

CHAPTER XXIX

Of the fulfilment of the Scriptures in the death of Christ; and of the Word “It is finished”

I BLESS Thee, and give thanks to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, Revealer of hidden mysteries, and Fulfiller of the Law and the Prophets, for Thy most perfect accomplishment of the Father’s Will in that short and welcome word with which, as soon as Thou hadst received the vinegar, Thou didst close, as it were, the story of Thy Life by saying: “It is finished.” This was as if Thou hadst openly said: “Now is fulfilled all that the old Law foretold concerning me, all that was prefigured by the sacrificial rites and by the ceremonies of the former dispensation. Now are actually brought to pass the inspired words of the holy prophets, and the long-cherished desires of the Patriarchs. Now is all that is needed for the Redemption of the human race fully worked out; now has been accomplished in a perfect way, both as to place and time, all that Holy Scripture has recorded of the promises of God. The few things that remain will of a surety in due time be made good. I have fulfilled My Father’s command: He sent me into the world; and I have finished the work which He gave me to do.

“Many a time and oft have I healed the sick; I have given abundant proofs of My Divine Power; as the Father has taught Me have I spoken in the world, and no part of saving doctrine have I kept back from the ears of the faithful. For three and thirty years have I been a pilgrim upon earth, and have dwelt as a friend among men; many a time and oft have I been wearied by journeyings: cruelly have I been slandered by My enemies; I have been betrayed by one of My disciples; I have been deserted by My friends; I have

been held captive by My enemies, and have been scourged by their underlings; I have been condemned by judges, and mocked by Chief Priests; and now, guiltless as I am, I am hanging here upon the Cross. What is there that I ought to have done more than I have done? What ought I to have suffered that I have not suffered? If I have failed in doing or in suffering aught, I am ready before My departure to make it good: but no, by My death, I shall satisfy to the last farthing every debt. To-day therefore do I pronounce all to be accomplished. Nor do I allow the term of My life to be further prolonged; but I lay down My life for My sheep, out of pure love for them; and at this hour, which I know to be the same as that in which the first Adam, by taking of the forbidden tree, incurred the penalty of eternal death, I take upon myself, of my own free choice, in satisfaction of the debt due by sinners for their sins, the penalty of the death of My Body, a penalty to which I am not liable for any sin of My own. The things concerning Me shall shortly have an end. Henceforth I shall not speak much in this world: I shall not long be in it, because I haste to the Father. Toil shall now cease, sorrow and mourning shall flee away, fighting shall have an end, trouble shall be no more, and at My death Death itself shall be destroyed: nothing more remains to be done, except that I should commend My Spirit to My Father, and should quit My Body until the third day. I know well that kindly-hearted men will not forget the ties of friendship, but will take It away and bury It in a new tomb. To show therefore that the demands of justice under the old Law are fully satisfied, and to establish the new law, I speak My last short Word to all who may hear it, and say: 'It is finished.' "

O Lord Jesus Christ, most illustrious and most wise Master, as Thou sayest, and as Thou bearest witness, so it is in truth: Thy word who can question? All that Thou sayest Thou dost attest by Divine Acts, and dost show to be supported by the utterances of the Prophets. The time has now come when Thou shouldst rest from all the work which Thou hast done upon earth. Thou, O Lord, in the beginning didst jointly with the Father create all things; and now, with the co-operation of the Father, Thou hast made all things new. In six days Thou didst accomplish the work of the making of the world, and now in the sixth age of the world Thou hast finished the work of man's Redemption. On the sixth day Thou didst form man from the slime of the earth, and on the sixth day Thou didst redeem him with Thy Blood. On the sixth day Adam was tempted and deceived by

Eve; on the sixth day Thou wast announced by an Angel, and conceived in the Virgin's womb. On the sixth day man sinned, and forfeited Paradise; on the sixth day Thou didst suffer for our sins, and by Thy mercy the thief was received into Paradise. In order, then, that the things which are new should correspond with the things which are old, the things of these last days with the things of the days which are gone before, it was well that the sixth word from the Cross should be: "It is finished."

Onward then, Lord Jesus, whithersoever Thou wilt; go back to Thy Father in Heaven, for Thou hast finished Thy great work of love upon earth. Go before Thy unworthy servants; make ready the way for them, that they may follow Thee with all speed. Set open that gate of the Heavenly Kingdom, which Adam's transgression had so long kept shut. Go, visit the Holy Fathers resting in Abraham's Bosom; give light to those who are sitting in darkness; break in pieces the power of the devil; loose the prisoners' chains; give rest to the weary; comfort those who mourn; deliver those who are looking for Thy coming; bring forth Thy captives from the dungeons of Hades; and when Thou shalt have led them forth and made them to dwell with the angels in the mansions of Heaven above, then, O Lord, in Thy Kingdom, remember me, I pray Thee, and lead me forth from my prison-house, from this my fleshly tabernacle of slime; from my present state which is so full of peril; from this unstable and troublesome world.

But see to it, O follower of Christ, that thou imitate Thy Master in that of which this Word speaks to thee: work on while time and strength for work are given thee: carry through what thou hast begun; that so, when the evening of life's day closes in on thee, thou too, with Jesus, Who has befriended Thee as it ran its course, mayest be able to say: "It is finished." Walk therefore in the way of true virtue; follow after righteousness; make up thy mind to fight even unto death against thy besetting sins; that so thou mayest lay hold on eternal life, and mayest be able to say with St. Paul: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." Thou hast yet somewhat left to do, thou hast yet to bear thy burden for a while: but soon the hour will come, when, being made perfect in a short space, thou mayest fulfil a long time.

O Jesus Christ, Who orderest all things in Heaven and in earth, Who art the brightest and most perfect Model of every virtue, and the endless Reward of every good work, direct, I pray Thee, all my actions in the way

of Thy commandments, and purify and enlighten every thought of my mind. Teach me to begin, humbly and with an eye to the praise and glory of Thy Blessed Name, every work which I undertake; to be diligent in performing it, and to bring it to a happy end. Grant that I may not grow slack before the time appointed of the Father; but that until I breathe my last breath, I may labour night and day in the vineyard of holy Religion for the penny of eternal life, and may work my very hardest in the workshop of our Heavenly Father's business; that so, after many a struggle and much hard toil, I may at length, when my last hour shall come, be able by Thy mercy joyfully to say with Thee: "It is finished." And do Thou, O good Jesus, mindful of what in this world I have had to endure, give me for my labour its hire, for my weariness repose, for my sorrow joy, for my struggle a crown, for my dishonour glory, for my misery happiness; for Thou wert and art the last end of all that I have done during my sojourn here on earth. Be Thou my Recompense in the Kingdom of Heaven; for Thee, and Thee only, Who art the joy and the glory of all Thy Saints, do I desire to possess as the Reward of my labours.

CHAPTER XXX

Of the woeful departure from this world of the Lord Jesus

I BLESS Thee, and give thanks to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, Life of the living, Hope of the dying, Saviour of all who trust in Thee, for Thy departure for a season out of this world; and for Thy happy return, through the agony of a cruel death, and the splendid martyrdom of the Cross, to the Bosom of the Father.

I praise and glorify Thee for Thy ashy paleness at the moment of death, for Thy sacred last agony, for the gradual failure of Thy bodily powers, and for the breaking of Thy Heart so full of love—all which was the penalty which Thou, the Giver of Life to all things that have breath, didst not shrink from paying, when Thou submittedst Thyself to the sentence of death, in order that thereby Thou mightest open to us the way to the Kingdom of Heaven.

I praise and glorify Thee for the loud cry which Thou didst utter from Thy Cross with super-human strength; for the sad divorce and bitter parting of Thy all-glorious Soul from Thy Body so full of love; for Thy most devout commendation of Thy Soul into the Father's hands; for the meek bowing of Thy sacred and thorn-crowned Head upon Thy Breast, in token of filial obedience persisted in to the last; for Thy loving yielding-up of Thy all-holy Soul for the Salvation of the world; and for that most sacred Word in which Thou didst pour forth Thy cry of loving prayer, saying: "Father, into Thy Hands I commend my Spirit"—which done, Thou didst straightway draw Thy last breath, and falling into a calm sleep, didst bring Thy earthly sojourn to an end.

How precious and victorious a death was that which slew our death, and purchased for us everlasting life. May then, O Christ, Thy death always remain fixed in my remembrance; and when thinking of Thy Blessed Death may I ever be mindful of my own; that so, when the end, all so uncertain, of my life shall come, I may not give way to panic or despair. This is the hour which, from the moment of Thy conception, Thou didst ever keep in mind; and to this hour didst Thou go forward as a traveller hasting to regain his fatherland, or a keen workman longing to attain the object of his toil. From the highest Heaven Thou didst come forth into the world; from the world Thou didst descend even into Hell; and from Hell Thou hast retraced Thy steps to Thy Throne in the highest Heaven.

And now, O my soul, bewail as best thou mayest the most cruel death of the Lord thy God, Who loved thee with so vast a love; think how Jesus died, and of the signs which marked His departure from the world. See how the Holy One and the Just dies, and no man lays it to heart: no one, save His poor sorrowful Mother (who, with a scanty following of her friends, stands weeping at the Cross's foot) realizes Who, and how mighty He was. She indeed has seen her most dearly-loved Son hang there above her, with His Body naked and covered with blood; she has seen Him growing paler and paler; she has seen Him in His agony; she has heard Him crying with a loud voice, as He yielded up the Ghost. What wonder, then, that she was overwhelmed with grief, that the blood left her cheeks, and that her soul fainted within her when her Saviour hung before her lifeless on His Cross. Stand thou, then, by Mary's side, and meditate with a sad heart upon the death of Jesus. Jesus, Who had done no wrong to any man, dies naked and as a slave; nowhere could anyone be found in worse case than His. No one was ever so dear to God, no one was ever more despised of men, than was Jesus of Nazareth, Who was crucified by Jews. See how the world repaid Him for all the mighty works and wonders He had wrought in it. He is put to death as if He were the vilest of robbers; He dies as if He were the poorest of men. The deathbed of Jesus is not of down, but is the hard wood of the Cross: He dies with no house or even roof to cover Him, but in the open air, on a spot loathsome and disgusting; not in a private chamber, but at the place of public execution; not surrounded by His disciples, but between two thieves; not in His Mother's embrace, but nailed to the arms of a lofty Cross. Beneath Him He had not even a bundle of straw; to cover

Him He had not even a piece of the cheapest sackcloth. No pillow had He for His Head; but there was given Him instead a wreath of sharp thorns. No shoes had He for His feet, or gloves for His hands; but instead of these, iron nails driven through both hands and feet, piercing both flesh and bones. In His supreme need He had not even one attendant; but He had to tolerate instead a loathsome companion, to wit, an impenitent thief, who all the while was blaspheming Him. Comforter not only had He none; but He was forsaken by almost all those who had once been His followers and familiar friends. He could move neither hand nor foot, nor was He able to relieve His pain by turning from side to side. There He hangs nailed fast to His Cross, stretched out till He can be stretched no further, tortured to the limit of endurance, racked in every limb, with no one to care for Him, no one to help Him, no one to comfort Him, heartbroken. His tongue was all that was left Him free to use; and He used it in praying for His enemies, and in preaching to us from the pulpit of the Cross His seven most wholesome Words against the seven deadly sins. But even His Tongue was not left without its torments; for when He was athirst it was steeped in gall and vinegar. From the soles of His Feet therefore to the top of His Head, Jesus is overwhelmed in the sea of His Passion; and about the ninth hour He cries out with a loud voice, and dies.

What and how great must He have been Who with this cry draws His last breath; at Whose passing away both Heaven and Earth mourn; at the sight of Whom death takes to flight; at Whose call the dead return to life; at seeing Whom the gates of death are broken down; Whose presence the devil cannot endure; Whose power none can resist; before Whom Hell trembles; Whom Heaven adores; Whom Angels serve, and Archangels obey; at the brightness of Whose shining Limbo becomes radiant with light, the Saints rejoice, chains fall of, and hosts of captive souls are set free. "Indeed," says the Centurion, "this was the Son of God"; for that blessed man, seeing that Jesus, after so crying out, had breathed His last, understands that the Human Body was indwelt by the invisible God, and straightway confesses that He, Whom the Jews had mocked and crucified, was the Son of God. O stony-hearted Jews, whom neither the Sufferer's anguish touches, nor the wonders which follow His death impress! Hear now, at length, ye whose ears are stopped; see now, at length, ye whose eyes are blinded, ye who ask for a sign from Heaven to be shown you! Signs are

wrought in Heaven above, and on the earth beneath; the elements wait upon Christ; and in the hour of His death, while ye, unhappy ones, laugh, they are overcome with grief. The sun is darkened at high noon, because it shrinks from seeing Him die; the earth quakes with fear, because it cannot quietly endure the insult offered to God; rocks are rent asunder, and with loud noises compassionate their Creator. The veil of the temple is rent, in order that the sacred Mysteries of Christ may be made plain, when the veil of the Old Dispensation which had hidden them is done away. Christ Himself is the true Victim That taketh away all the sins of the world. He is the spotless Lamb of God, slain at Paschal-tide upon the Cross. He is the true Priest, consecrated by God, Who offered Himself as a Sacrifice to the Father for an odour of sweetness. He is the High Priest, Who once in every year enters alone into the Holy of Holies, to pray, not for the people of the Jews only, but for the Salvation of all those who believe in Him; for this He truly did by dying, once for all, for the human race, when the fullness of time was come. The graves also are opened in order that the Resurrection of Christ with many Saints might be shown to be close at hand.

Many there were, who had come together to that sight, and saw the wonderful things that were done, who were pricked in their hearts, and returned smiting their breasts. Retire thou too, O my soul, into thy inner self; mourn with those who mourn, weep with those who weep for Christ; lest thou be found harder than the rocks, and more faithless than the Jews. Blessed are those tears which are shed for love of the Crucified. It is a dutiful and a very pleasant thing to weep for so sweet a Lord. It is a great solace to a lover's soul to weep freely in compassionating the loved one. Jesus Himself wept often for the woes of men; and moved by His boundless pity, when tears failed, He shed for us His Blood. Thy Lord Jesus Christ died for thee upon the Cross: henceforth therefore let this world be dead to thee. Learn from the death of Jesus to keep ever in mind thy own death; and strive also to prepare thyself to die; for thou knowest not when thy Lord will come; thou knowest not when thy Maker will call thee hence. Watch and pray always, that so thou mayest be found ready. So act, and so speak, as if this day were to be thy last. Learn to die before death comes, that so when it does come, it may not seem to thee a prison-house, but rather the gate of life. Christ is dead and the prophets are dead; and soon thou too must go the way in which thy fathers have gone before thee. But great is the

hope, very great the comfort, of those words of Jesus: "He that believeth in Me, although he be dead, shall live"; and again: "He who heareth My word, and believeth Him that sent Me, hath life everlasting." In this life, then, make Jesus thy Friend, that in the life which is to come thou mayest find mercy at His hands. Cast from thee whatever comes between thee and the love of Jesus, whatever keeps thee back from seeking the Kingdom of Heaven. Be on thy guard against everything which can stain the purity of thy conscience: give up everything which tends to destroy thy peace of mind. Keep thyself detached from the world, united to God, friendly with Christ. Walk with Jesus in the liberty of the Spirit; take no thought for the things of the world. Make ready for Jesus the chamber of thy heart, offer to Him a large upper room furnished; that so before thou goest hence, Jesus and His disciples may keep with thee a mystic Passover.

When thy health begins to fail, and thou hast cause to think that thy summons to depart hence is at hand, humbly lift up thy heart to Jesus, and say to Him in the words of Mary and of Martha: "Lord, behold, he whom Thou lovest is sick": for the loving and merciful Jesus, Who wept over Lazarus, and brought him back to life, is able to assuage thy pains, and after thy death to raise thee up again at the last day. At that time especially call to mind the Lord's Supper, and remember how the meek and lowly Jesus washed His disciples' feet, and before His departure instituted for their comfort the Sacrament of His Holy Body. Pray humbly, then, to the Lord Jesus that thou mayest be cleansed from the stains of thy sins, and that before thy departure thou mayest be duly strengthened for thy journey by receiving His most Precious Body. When thou hast received It, make thy thanksgiving, meditate devoutly on the sweet words of His new commandment, and then, with eyes raised heavenwards, long with all the powers of thy soul to be united with Christ. After this, turn thy thoughts to the Passion of Christ, and draw from it the comfort with which it is so full. Go also with Jesus and His disciples into the garden near the Mount of Olives; that is to say, regardless of thy friends around thee, retire within thyself, so as to be quite alone with God; and pray to our Heavenly Father for a good end of thy earthly pilgrimage. Go down upon thy knees with Jesus, fall upon thy face, put thyself into God's hands, and use those most perfect words of Christ: "Father, not My Will, but Thine be done"; for He knows well, whether to live or to die is best for thy soul's health. Ask also

thy brethren and all good people who come to visit thee to watch with thee in prayer that thou mayest escape the snares of the enemy. In every trial that besets thee go to Jesus, and follow Him as He bears His Cross to the Hill of Calvary. There take thy stand, choose there to end thy life, and there commend thy spirit too. Put the Passion and the Death of Jesus between thee and the judgement to come, and keep thy eyes ever fixed upon the Crucified. When the Devil seeks to terrify thee, invoke the Name of Jesus and raise the standard of the Holy Cross. If he casts in thy teeth thy past misdeeds and thy many sins, answer him by pleading the infinite merits of Christ.

Call to mind also the seven Words of Jesus, which He spoke from the Cross for thy instruction.

As soon as He had been raised upon His Cross, He prayed for His enemies, and forgave those who were ill-treating Him; and this He did in order that thou mightest learn to forgive from the heart those who have wronged thee, before thou pleadest for thy own forgiveness.

Next, He promised to the penitent thief the joys of Paradise; and this He did in order that thou shouldst not despair by reason of the grievous burden of thy sins; but shouldst, with full trust in His mercy, ask Him to remember thee in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Thirdly, He committed His most blessed Virgin Mother to the chaste John; and this He did in order that thou, in thy agony, shouldst confidently have recourse to Mary, His most gentle Mother, who is the helper of those who are in need, and shouldst earnestly commend thyself to her, and to the blessed apostle John, and to all the saints. Commend thyself also to the prayers of thy brethren, and to those of all the faithful, asking them to remember thee after thy departure in their dirges and in Masses.

Fourthly, Jesus made it plain that He was left alone in His anguish; and this He did in order that thou, when thou hast a heavy burden of pain to bear, shouldst not be impatient at not at once finding relief from it, but shouldst submit thyself in all things to God's Holy Will and pleasure.

Fifthly, He said "I thirst," in order that thou shouldst have a burning thirst after God, Who is the Fountain of living water, and shouldst long to depart, and to be with Christ; for this is far better than to prolong thy sojourn upon earth, and to be further exposed to dangers of every kind.

Sixthly, He spoke the Word “It is finished,” in order that thou, when thou perceivest thy last hour to be at hand, shouldst render thanks to God for every good action of thy life, and shouldst pray that thy shortcomings may be supplied by the merits of Christ.

Lastly, with a loud voice He commended His soul into the Father’s Hands, in order that at the hour of thy departure from the world thou too shouldst not fail to have upon thy tongue, and often to repeat, the words of that blessed commendation, than which thou canst not find anything more sweet to be remembered at the last.

O most loving Jesus, Brightness of the Father’s glory, and Sun of righteousness, Who for me, Thy poor unworthy servant, didst vouchsafe to suffer this most shameful form of agony; and when delivering up Thy Soul upon the Hill of Calvary, for the redemption of the world, didst commend It in prayer to the Father, grant that I may ever feel within me both sorrow and love for Thy most cruel Death; grant that, by mortifying all my corrupt affections, I may daily exercise myself in dying with Thee; that so, when the hour of my departure shall be at hand, I may be found meet to live again in the light of Thy mercies, and joyfully to enter with Thee into the bliss of Paradise. Stand by my deathbed, help me in my agony, come to me when I need Thee most, defend me from my enemies, deliver me from my distress; comfort me in my sorrow, strengthen me when I am dismayed, refresh me when I faint, take me to Thyself when my last sigh is breathed. May Thy last Word upon the Cross be my last word on earth; and when speech fails me, give heed to this last wish of my soul: “Father, into Thy Hands I commend my spirit: Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord, the God of Truth.”

CHAPTER XXXI

Of the wan and piteous appearance of Jesus, when on His Soul leaving His Body, evident signs of death showed themselves in Him

I BLESS Thee, and give thanks to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, spotless Mirror of the Majesty of God, for the wan and piteous appearance, due to death's onset, which Thou didst present, when after Thy Soul had left Thy Body, evident signs of mortality showed themselves in Thee.

Alas, alas, my Jesus, fairest of men, the comeliness of Thy pleasant countenance has been marred by the filthy spitting upon Thee of men of unclean lips, and in Thy contest with death Thou hast lost the bloom of Thy beauteous manhood! Alas, my most loving God, all these things have befallen Thee because my sins had to be washed away: it was in order that my soul might be made white, that Thou didst submit Thy Body to be made unsightly; it was to save me from death eternal, that Thou didst taste for a while the most cruel of deaths. O Death, what hast thou done? How is it that thou wast not afraid to lay thy hand upon the Lord's Anointed? What power hadst thou over Him; what crime couldst thou lay to the charge of the Son of God? Thou hast fallen upon Him, and slain Him; but thy victory has cost thee dear: for in slaying Him thou hast slain thyself; impaled upon the stake of Christ's Divinity, thou hast brought to an end thy cruel reign; and on the descent into Hell of the Soul of Christ thou hast been compelled to set free all the Saints, dead because of Adam's sin, who had so long been held captive by the prince of Darkness. As indeed the Prophet had long since foretold: "O death, I will be thy death; O hell, I will be thy sting." And so in

Church is raised the triumphant song: "Life dies upon the Tree: the grave has lost its sting."

By Thy death, therefore, O Christ, the hope of life is mine once more, and by Thy victory over the prince of death a crown of joy is given me. Abundant indeed, and manifold, was the grace which flowed forth from Thee, when Thou didst die upon the Cross in order that we might live; for original sin is done away, actual sin is forgiven, pardon is extended to all, the sentence is modified, vengeance is stayed, every debt is wiped out; to no contrite soul is mercy denied; for of Thy Passion the merit is inexhaustible.

It was not for nothing that Thou didst submit to die. For what then didst Thou die? It was not an angel that needed Thy death; for the angels have never lost their first estate. The devil can never be reinstated, for his fall only hardened him. It was for man, then, that Thou didst die; and it was because death came upon him by reason of his being caught in the snares of the devil. Fitting indeed it was that Thy Charity should raise up him whom another's malice had caused to fall: but how great is the love, how immeasurable is the depth, of the counsels of God! Oh the wonder of the never-to-be-forgotten mystery—man earning salvation through the merits of the Cross, winning a kingdom through its offence; entering into glory through an exacted penalty; brought through death into life everlasting! Thy Passion, therefore, O Lord, is of all things the most sacred; it is for all wounds a sovereign remedy; Thy Cross is the downfall of all who are against us; it is the safeguard of all who trust in Thee; Thy death is the penalty by which all our faults are expiated, it is the foundation of all our virtues. I will rejoice, then, in Thy merits and in the fruits of Thy Passion, and I will ever take comfort from the thought that Thou hast redeemed me; but my love for Thee must ever make me grieve over Thy cruel death. It is love that makes me rejoice with Thee in Thy victory over death; and it is love that makes me bewail Thy having had to bear such a heavy load of anguish for my sake.

Come then, O faithful soul, and look upon the pale and careworn features of thy crucified Saviour; mark each several limb of Jesus Who is dead, and let the greatness of thy compassion make thine eyes run down with tears. Thy time is well spent, very sacred are thy thoughts, when thou art occupied in contemplating Jesus hanging on the Cross. As a cluster of cypress in the vineyards of Engaddi, so is the thought of the Crucified in the heart of a

good man. If, then, thine eye is pitiful, if thou hast in thee aught of the milk of human kindness, lift up the eyes of thy mind to meditate upon God, crucified for thee, hanging dead upon the Cross. There before thee is the Tree of the Cross, upon which hangs thy Salvation; of the devout the Redemption, of unbelievers the laughing-stock. His lifeless, thorn-crowned Head is bowed low upon His sacred Breast. The Eyes of Him from Whose all-seeing Eye no secret can be hid, are sightless now. The Ears of Him Who foreknows all things, hear nothing now. He Who gives to flowers the sweetness of their scent, smells nothing now. The sense of taste has gone from Him Who gives to all things that have life their life and food. He Who makes the dumb to speak opens His Lips no more. He Who teaches men knowledge is silent now. That Tongue which preached the truth lies useless in His Throat. That Face, which once was brighter than the Sun, is now deadly pale. Those Cheeks, which once were fair as a turtle-dove's, are fair no longer. Those Hands, by which the heavens were spread out, are pierced now with cruel nails. The Knees, so often bent in prayer, hang now limp and powerless. The Legs, which like marble pillars used to support the Body's weight, have now lost all their strength. The Feet, which were so often weary when the gospel was being preached, are now as tightly fastened to the wood of the Cross as if they were fixed in the stocks. It can be seen that every Limb has been in agony; they are each one covered with wounds and blood. But His bones are not broken, as are the bones of the thieves: and this is in order that the Scripture might be fulfilled; for He is the true Lamb, prefigured in the Book of the Law, the bones of which were ordered to be kept unbroken. This is my Beloved, O ye daughters of Jerusalem; This is my Friend; and it is to this pass that death has brought Him, in exchange for Whose Death—so precious was He—if I could submit to a thousand deaths, I could make no due return for His love.

O most sweet Jesus, Redeemer of my soul, how can I win to die with Thee upon the Cross; how, at my departure from the body, can I obtain such happiness? Grant, I earnestly beseech Thee, that in this frail body I may so live, so order all my doings and all my affections in accordance with Thy Will, that I may be able to finish my course in a state of grace; and in spite of all the temptations which beset me, may receive at last the crown of joy eternal.

CHAPTER XXXII

Of the cruel piercing of the most sacred Side of the Lord Jesus after His death

I BLESS Thee, and give thanks to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, exhaustless Fount of Love and Grace, for the cruel piercing after death of Thy most holy Side. So fiercely, O Thou of holy ones most Holy, was Thy right Side then struck and pierced by the lance of one of the soldiers, that the weapon, passing through Thy inward parts, entered Thy tender Heart, and from the gaping wound thus made there came forth a fountain of Blood and water, so wholesome for us, that, sprinkled therewith, all mankind may be healed.

O wondrous fountain of the Holy Blood welling from out the right Side of Christ as He hung in death upon the Cross, flowing ever onward for the Redemption of the human race! O bright and most refreshing stream of blessed water gushing forth from the Saviour's Heart for the washing away of all our sins! Under the Old Dispensation, Moses, the Servant of the Lord, smote the rock in the wilderness, and thereout came there forth so plenteous a supply of water that the people and their cattle drank thereof with joy, and no longer murmured. But the brawny soldier Longinus, when he opened Christ's right Side, struck the Rock with his lance so fierce a blow, that thereout Blood and water have never ceased to pour; and our holy Mother the Church has drawn therefrom the Sacraments, by means of which her life is preserved: for as Eve is called the mother of all living, and was formed from her husband Adam's rib, so is the Holy Church Militant named the Mother of all the faithful, and She is the new creation from the Side of Christ, Her Spouse. O mighty and precious Wound of my Lord, worthy of love art Thou above all wounds; so deep and so wide art Thou that all the faithful may enter by Thee into the Side of Christ; miraculous art Thou in

what flows from Thee; most copious in blessings; in time last formed, in glory preeminent. Of the Divine and holy fountain of this Wound whosoever shall drink, or of its love taste but one drop, he shall forget all his evil deeds, shall be cured of the fever of carnal and worldly desires, shall burn with love for the things which are eternal, shall be filled with the joy unspeakable of the Holy Spirit; and this Holy Fountain shall become in him a fountain of living water springing up unto everlasting life.

Go in, go in, my soul, into the right Side of thy crucified Lord! Enter through that glorious Wound into the most loving Heart of Jesus, pierced with the lance for love of thee, that so in the cleft of that Rock thou mayest take refuge from the tempest of the world! Draw near, O man, to that Heart so exalted, but made so low for thee; to the Heart of God, Who is so far above thee, but Who opens to thee His door! Come in, thou blessed of the Lord; why dost thou stand without? The river of life, the way of salvation, the heavenly storehouse, shedding perfumes all around; all these lie open to thee. Here is a place of refuge from the face of the enemy who would tempt thee, here is a place in which thou mayest find mercy against the wrath of the judgement to come. Here is a fountain, whence the oil of gladness and of grace shall never cease to flow, wherein sinners may ever find mercy, if only they will come to it with hearts truly penitent and contrite. Here is the well-spring of the river of God, going forth from the midst of Paradise to water the face of the earth, to give the thirsty soul to drink, to wash away sins, to quench the flames of lust, to still the strivings of anger. Do thou too, then, take from this Fountain of the Saviour a cup of love. Take from the Side of Jesus sweet helps for thy life, that henceforth thou mayest live not in thyself, but in Him Who was wounded for thee. Give thy heart to Him, Who has opened His to thee. Enter through the hallowed Wound into the inmost Heart of thy Redeemer. He bids thee enter; He asks thee to dwell with Him; His wish is that thou shouldst have but one heart with Him. "My son," He says to thee, "give Me thy heart." This is all that God asks of thee: give but this, and thou hast offered the gift than which nothing can be more acceptable to Him. Give it, then, to Jesus, and to none else besides: give it to Christ, and not to the world: give thy heart to that Wisdom which will never fail thee, not to that philosophy which is so but in name. He caused His Side to be thrown so widely open, and to be so deeply pierced, in order that the way by which thou mightest draw near to the Heart of thy Beloved

should be made plain to thee; in order that thou mightest penetrate into the very Soul of the Son of God, and be made one with Him in true union of heart; that thou mightest centre all thy affections upon Him, and mightest, in singleness of heart, do all thy works to His honour and glory; that thou mightest study to please Him alone, and mightest strive with all thy mind and with all thy strength to serve Him, and Him only. Where canst thou rest more securely, where dwell more safely, where sleep thy last sleep more sweetly, than in the Wounds of Jesus Christ, Who was crucified for thee? Where canst thou find wisdom more abundant, knowledge more profitable, than in the Heart of Christ, Who suffered for thee, from out of Whose Breast there is ever flowing for thy use a stream of living water? Where, when thy love is beginning to wax cold, can it be more powerfully rekindled? Where canst thou so readily avoid distraction? Where canst thou be kept so fully recollected, as in the Heart of Jesus, Which for love of thee was pierced with the lance? Nothing inflames, nothing draws, nothing gets to the bottom of, the heart of man so thoroughly as love for the crucified Redeemer. This thought it was which led one of the Saints to exclaim: “My love was crucified.” To which with all my heart I echo: “My love was wounded and pierced, that so I might find a ready entrance into His loving Heart.”

Thither then make all the eager loving haste which thou canst make bold to show; kiss the holy Side of Jesus, that so Therefrom thou mayest be sprinkled with water and with Blood. Pull out thy own heart, if thou canst, and place it close to the Heart of Jesus, in order that He may keep it, and rule it, and possess it, so that other things may not get hold of it, and defile it. Open thy heart to Him; commit thyself in full trust to Him; leave to Him thy “I will” and “I won’t”; let there be one heart and one mind between thee and God: that so thou mayest think and feel with Him in all things, and mayest know His Holy Will both now and evermore. When without reserve thou shalt have made over thy heart to Jesus, for Him to keep and to dwell therein for ever, then shall great peace be thine, nor shalt thou be easily put out, or distressed by the troubles of thy daily life.

O most pure Jesus, Who dwellest in the hearts of those who love Thee, and from Whom all good desires do come; O Thou Who hangest upon the Cross before the eyes of all who meditate upon Thy Passion; O Divine treasure-house of all gifts and graces; O Christ my King, Redeemer of the

faithful, Who causedst Thy most holy Side to be pierced by the point of a cruel lance; set open for me, I beseech Thee, the door of Thy mercy; suffer me to enter through the gaping Wound of Thy Side into the very recesses of Thy most loving Heart; that so my heart may be set on fire by the touch of Thine, and may be united to Thee by a bond of love so indissoluble, that Thou mayest dwell in me, and I in Thee, and that nothing may ever separate me from Thee. Pierce my heart with the arrow of Thy love, may the soldier's spear pass through my vitals, and penetrate the inmost recesses of my heart, that so, by means of this wholesome wound, my soul may attain perfect health, I may refuse all love but Thine, and out of Thee may nowhere seek for comfort. May my heart be free of access and lie open to Thee alone; may it be estranged from the world, shut to the devil, and fenced on all sides by the sign of the Cross to resist temptation of every kind.

CHAPTER XXXIII

The taking down of the Lord Jesus from the Cross

I BLESS Thee, and give thanks to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, Power of God, for Thy lowly descent, at the hour of Vespers, from the lofty Cross, upon which, for our Salvation, Thou didst hang till sunset; and whence Thou wast then ordered to be taken down, in accordance with the Jewish law, and because the Paschal Feast was about to be kept on Holy Saturday.

I praise and glorify Thee for the faithful service so lovingly rendered Thee by Thy familiar friends, what time those most just men, Joseph of Arimathea, and Nicodemus, a Doctor of the Law, came with their servants to the Cross, and having set up ladders against it, mounted one on the right and another on the left, while a third was engaged in loosing Thy Feet. With due reverence and love, they drew from Thy sacred Hands and Feet three precious nails, more precious than burnished gold; and then with the help of their companions, they reverently took hold of Thy most illustrious Body, and modestly and carefully lowered It to the ground.

Blessed and full of pity were ye, who did this act of mercy to the Lord your God, in order to prepare His Body for the grave; ye were careful to show even more faithful devotion to your Friend when He was dead than ye had shown to Him when He was alive. Therefore in Heaven shall ye receive a special reward from God, to Whom ye showed yourselves so faithful upon earth: and without doubt He for Whom ye prepared a burial place upon earth will reward your loving care by preparing for you a happy mansion in Heaven, as on the night before His Death He promised His disciples.

Oh that to me too, the least of all God's servants, might have been granted some share in the Burial of my Lord; that in the offices connected

with it, some service, however small, might have been assigned to me! How willingly would I have held the ladder at the Cross's foot; or, as I stood below, have handed up the pincers for the drawing of the nails; or even lent a helping hand to those who were lowering the Sacred Corpse. What happiness would it have been if I could have stood beneath the Cross, so close to it as to have caught in my bosom one of the falling nails, which I might have kept as a Memorial of my Lord's Passion, that so, whenever I should look upon it, I might be moved to tears.

I praise and glorify Thee for that longing embrace with which Thy most sorrowful Mother received Thee into her arms, and folded Thee therein, when with compassionate devotion Thy faithful ones delivered Thee to her, and laid Thee in her Virgin lap. How copious were the tears that then streamed from those eyes, of all eyes the purest; how burning was the flood that then bedewed that face, of all faces the most modest, and fell from Thy Mother's cheeks upon Thy Corpse! How pure were the kisses with which Thy chaste Mother then covered Thy lifeless limbs; how often, and with what anguish, did she examine the prints of Thy Sacred Wounds! How loving were the arms with which she encircled and held the Blessed Fruit of her womb, that Fruit Which she had seen sacrificed upon the Altar of the Cross for the Redemption of mankind! Who is there among the Saints who could tell forth the copiousness of those tears which the tender Mother of Jesus at that time shed, or could understand the full agony of her grief?

Draw near, then, now my soul, and devoutly kiss the blood-red Wounds of Jesus. As He hung nailed to the Cross thou couldst not come near to Him for the pressure of the crowd and the height of the Cross; but now He lies before Thee in His weeping Mother's arms, dead and covered with Wounds. Draw near, O sinner, however great thy sinfulness, however much the fear of Hell oppresses thee; for it was for thee that the Lamb was slain; it was for thee that the Victim was offered, Which has taken away the sin of all the world. So loving and merciful is the Lord Jesus, so tender and so sweet is Mary His Mother, that none can depart un comforted, none go away empty, who with his whole heart shall have asked to be forgiven.

O how sweet are these sayings to me a sinner, sweeter are they than honey and the honeycomb to my heart; for I know that all that Jesus suffered in the flesh was suffered for me; and that from all the good which the Blessed Virgin did in her life, from all the holy service which she

rendered to Christ, and from all the affliction which in this world she endured with Jesus—to me from all this come forth merit and comfort.

Keep, then, upon thy lap, O blessed Mother, thy only, thy dearly-loved Son, Who for my sake was put to death; keep Jesus from the tomb, while I, on bended knees, humbly adore Him upon earth, pour out my prayers before Him, and kiss His Wounds, and His mangled and tortured Limbs. Hear me, O blessed Lady, be merciful to me, grant what I ask; and put before me for my kisses, Him Whom my soul loveth.

CHAPTER XXXIV

Prayers to the several parts of Christ's Body: and first to His Feet

O BEAUTEIOUS Feet of my Lord Jesus Christ, Which were transfixed by one most cruel nail being driven through You both, and thereupon did shed forth much precious Blood, I reverently adore You; and I kiss You, earnestly praying that the sins which I have committed in standing or walking may be forgiven me.

Hail Mary, etc.

To the Legs

O beauteous Legs, and humble Knees of my Lord Jesus Christ, Which were in prayer so often bent and prostrate upon the naked earth, Which were racked with burning fever in His Passion, I humbly adore You; and I kiss You, meekly entreating that the sins which I have so often committed by my want of fervour and devotion in the service of God may mercifully be forgiven me.

Hail Mary, etc.

To the Side

O most adorable Side of my Lord Jesus Christ, in which the Wound of Divine Love is to be seen pierced through and through, I specially adore Thee; and I cover Thee with kisses, earnestly imploring that the sins which I have so often committed against brotherly charity, and by waxing cold in my love for God, may be forgiven me.

Hail Mary, etc.

To the Back

O most patient Back of my Lord Jesus Christ, Which wast ready without a murmur to bear the Tree of Life, and the burden of the sins of all sinners, Which also submittedst to be most cruelly scourged, I devoutly adore Thee; and I reverently kiss Thee, praying that the sins which I have committed by being impatient under the burdens laid upon me may be forgiven me.

Hail Mary, etc.

To the Hands

O adorable Hands of my Lord Jesus Christ, Which were stretched out to Their widest upon the Cross, and were pierced by great iron nails, I devoutly adore You; and with tears in my eyes I kiss You, and pray that all the sins which I have committed by act, or by touch, may be done away.

Hail Mary, etc.

To the Breast

O most pure Breast of my Lord Jesus Christ, on Which was never spot of sin, nor could any enter Therein, upon Which blessed John the Apostle leant at Supper, I adore Thee in all sincerity; and I lovingly kiss Thee, praying that whatever guilt I have contracted by foul thoughts may be thoroughly washed away.

Hail Mary, etc.

To the Neck

O white and slender Neck of my Lord Jesus Christ, Which wast so often mere skin and bone from hunger and from thirst, Which wast never painstakingly adorned, nor ever proudly stretched out, or lifted up, but wast humbly bowed in filial respect; Which in the Passion wast so cruelly buffeted, I humbly adore Thee; and I lovingly kiss Thee, praying that whatever I have done from motives of vanity may be forgiven me.

Hail Mary, etc.

To the Mouth

O most sweet Mouth of my Lord Jesus Christ, out of Which the word of Salvation went forth into the world, Which wast defiled by the spittle of the Jews, Which wast embittered with the draught of vinegar, I adore Thee; and I gently kiss Thee, entreating that the sins which I have so often committed in eating, drinking, and speaking may be forgiven me.

Hail Mary, etc.

To the Face

O illustrious Face of my Lord Jesus Christ, full of kindness and awe, Which wast so foully spat upon by the Jews, Which wast so shamefully buffeted, and mockingly veiled, I adore Thee with the reverence which is Thy due; and I lovingly kiss Thee, praying Thee to pardon me all the disrespect by which I have so many times given offence to Thy Majesty.

Hail Mary, etc.

To the Ears

O blessed Ears of my Lord Jesus Christ, Which no breath of flattery ever entered, Which no sneering or offensive word ever made to swerve from the path of uprightness, I honour and adore You; and I reverently kiss You, and pray that I may speedily forget every idle word which I have drunk in by listening to that which I ought not.

Hail Mary, etc.

To the Eyes

O Eyes of my Lord Jesus Christ, brightly shining, never soiled by any evil desire, now dimmed by death; Eyes Whence many a time came forth a shower of tears, with all my heart I adore You; and I gently kiss You, praying the while for pardon for all the stains upon my soul caused by sight used unlawfully.

Hail Mary, etc.

To the Head

O sublime and adorable Head of my Lord Jesus Christ, having now a sharp crown of thorns pressed down upon the top of Thee, and Thy hair stained and hallowed by the Blood Which has run down upon Thee, I join the angels and all the heavenly host in adoring Thee; upon each of Thy sacred Wounds I print loving kisses; and I earnestly entreat Thee to rid me from all the thorn-pricks which my sins have left in me, and to vouchsafe to number me among Thy elect, even though my place must needs be found among the least of all the members of Thy Body.

Hail Mary, etc.

CHAPTER XXXV

Of the adorable Burial of the Lord Jesus

O LORD JESUS CHRIST, sweet Saviour of life, and Brightness of the everlasting day, I bless Thee, and give thanks to Thee, for the careful preparing with precious spices of Thy sacred Body for Its burial. This was not indeed needful for warding off corruption; but Thou didst accept it as showing the devotion of Thy friends, and as being in accordance with Jewish custom—witness the instances of like burial recorded of certain of the Patriarchs and Kings.

I praise and glorify Thee, for the loving enwrapment of Thy sacred Body in a clean linen cloth, and for the respectful binding round of Thy ever-blessed Head with a pure white napkin, which was afterwards found in the Holy Sepulchre.

I praise and glorify Thee for the removal, amid many tears, of Thy Body to the place of Its burial; for the reverence with which It was placed there; for Thy condescension in lying in the new tomb hewn out of a rock, which was provided for Thee by Joseph, a noble counsellor; where, because the hour was late, Thou wast, by Thy weeping friends, honourably buried, and wast tightly closed up therein with a heavy stone.

Rejoice and be glad, O venerable Joseph, that so pious an office was thine, and that thou wast able to do this charitable work for Christ. I thank thee much, and heartily commend as worthy of all honour thy noble conduct throughout this matter; for not only didst thou ask of Pilate leave to bury the sacred Body, but for It thou didst open that very tomb, which thou hadst made ready for thine own future resting-place. How highly must God have thought of thee, when He, Whose dominion extends to the ends of the earth and over everything within the circuit of the Heavens, chose thy tomb above all other places in the world as the place of His Burial. Be sure, O

most illustrious of men, that henceforth, so long as this world shall last, and one faithful soul shall be left in it, thou shalt ever be had in honour, both by God and by men.

For this most Holy Sepulchre shall be more noble and more glorious than all the sepulchres of Saints and Kings, and shall be celebrated throughout the world. From the uttermost parts of the earth shall pilgrims flock to visit this holy place, and to worship at the spot where the Body of their Lord was laid to rest. Here was Jesus buried, here the Crucified was laid; here did the holy women lament over Him, here were the guards set; here did Christ rise on the third day; here was Jesus seen of Mary Magdalene; here appeared from Heaven the Angel of the Lord; here were the guards struck with terror, and became as dead men.

Here then, by the Tomb, do thou, O my soul, for a while abide, so as to join the holy women in mourning over the Lord Jesus, Who for thy sake was laid in the grave. Fitting indeed is it that thou shouldst pay thy tribute of grief to Him, at Whose hands thou dost hope one day to receive the reward of joy eternal. Think how intense was the grief of all Christ's faithful ones, and specially of the holy women, at seeing Jesus taken from them, and laid in a tomb—Christ for love of Whom they had given up all that they had, Whom they had followed hither and thither for so long, to Whom they had so often ministered of their substance, Whom they had loved so tenderly that they could scarce bring themselves to lose His sweet presence for even a short moment; with Whom they longed ever to live and to hold sweet converse, and through Whom they believed that joy everlasting would be theirs. The more intense their love, the more bitter surely will have been their grief.

But what above all rent the hearts of these sorrowing ones was the thought that the hope of their Lord's rising again seemed to be at an end; and that their faith was, so to speak, buried with Jesus in the tomb. It seemed therefore to these poor women that the only comfort left them was to weep over Him Who had been taken from them, or to make ready sweet spices; that so if they could not bring Him back to life, they might at least, by their faithful service in embalming It, preserve His Body from decay. But, O holy and devoted women, ye who love Christ with an unquenchable love, do not, I pray you, lament over much; do not give way to despair; call to mind the words which Jesus Himself spoke to you when He was in

Galilee, and wait yet a while for their fulfilment; for after three days He will without doubt rise again. Then quite plainly and with great joy, shall ye again see Him, over Whose burial, with spirits utterly broken and with such sad hearts, ye are now lamenting. Then shall the hearts of all His friends, who now so deeply mourn His death and burial, be filled with renewed joy; nor will He need this embalmment of yours, for when He rises from the dead He will appear in great glory. He will have put on immortality, and death shall no more have dominion over Him.

Learn thou too, O my soul, from the Burial of Jesus to meditate with profit upon the dissolution of thy own body. Needs must that what from the earth thou didst receive, that to the earth thou must restore: dust thou art and to dust shalt thou return. Upon what then dost thou pride thyself, thou who must soon be mere rottenness, and a thing hidden out of sight in the ground? What seest thou to yearn after in a world, out of which thou must so soon be cast, trodden under foot of men? Whenever then thou lookest upon the graves of the dead, remember that thou too wilt soon be with them. There—and thou knowest it well—there is the home appointed for every one that liveth. There, laid low together, content with a mere corner of earth, shall the rich man and the poor man share one bed. There gentleman and commoner cannot be known the one from the other, and the strong and the weak are upon the same footing. There the miser's wealth will not profit him; nor will the crafty man be helped by all his cunning. There the epicure will be food for worms, and the fop will stink in the nostrils of the passer-by. There the loftiness of men will be bowed down, and the counsel of the haughty ones will be brought to nought. Remember that nothing mortal can endure for ever, and that man, having corrupted his nature by sin, must needs go back to the slime from which he was taken.

Strive so to live in this present world, and so to mortify by the spirit the deeds of the flesh, that when thy body is mouldering in the dust thy soul may be found meet to rest in a home of blessed peace. Spend the Good Friday of this life in painfulness and toil, and thou shalt have a Holy Saturday of rest, and an Easter of joy unspeakable at the resurrection of the just. The stricter therefore thy life in this world, the calmer shall be thy sleep in the tomb; the stronger now thy hold upon the Cross, the greater shall be thy confidence when thou comest into the presence of Christ. The

more bitter now thy sorrow for thy sins, the fewer of them will there be to be purged away by the avenging fire.

Bewail then, bewail now thy sins, while the day of grace is thine, while the door of mercy stands open, while God, with Whom is plenteous Redemption, is ready to accept thy penitence. Bewail also the unhappy condition of the world, and that grievous softness of men, whence it comes that so few true followers of the Crucified are to be found, and that the spiritual fervour of so many soon grows cold.

Henceforth, then, be it thy daily practice to meditate upon Christ Jesus. Him Crucified keep ever before thy eyes; stand ever beneath thy Saviour's Cross; in life and in death be with Jesus in the Tomb; that so when Christ, thy Life, shall appear, thou too mayest rise with Him in glory. Amen.

TREATISE II

PRAYERS CONCERNING THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST, DIVIDED INTO TWO PARTS

PART I

CONCERNING THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST, AND HIS APPEARANCES

CHAPTER I

Of the victory of our Lord Jesus Christ upon the Cross, His triumph over death, and His most joyful Resurrection from the grave

I BLESS Thee, and give thanks to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, for Thy victory and triumph upon the Cross over death, and for Thy glorious and joyful Resurrection from the Tomb, in which, after being buried amid many tears, Thou didst, for our sakes, lie for three days and nights, actually a corpse, hidden from every human eye, and closed up with a great stone, so that Thou couldst neither be touched nor seen by Thy disciples or Thy friends. Thou wast, moreover, watched by a strong guard of heathen soldiers as a precaution against Thy rising from the dead, and making Thy escape; and to prevent Thy disciples from carrying Thee away, secretly taking Thee to some other place, worshipping Thee as God, and saying to the people: “The Crucified is risen from the dead.”

But in this case surely the wickedness of evil men recoiled upon themselves; and all the craftiness of the devil, all the might of Pilate, all the wrong-headedness of the people, all the knavery of the priests, all the wisdom of the Scribes, all the counsel of the Pharisees and of the Elders— anxious to wipe out Thy Holy Name from among men—were brought to nought. Of a truth counsel against the Lord there can be none; no earthly power can withstand the Most High; against the Wisdom of God man’s cunning exalteth itself in vain; the All-knowing God cannot be deceived by tricks, no matter how crafty they may be. Thou Who didst lay the foundations of the earth, and didst set to the sea its bounds; Thou Who didst make all things in their weight, in their number, and in their extent; Thou to

Whom were known the time of Thy Birth, and the hour of Thy Death; Thou knewest also the time appointed for Thy Resurrection, and its hour.

When therefore, O most merciful Lord Jesus, midnight was past, and dawn was at hand, Thou didst in a glorious Body, in an atmosphere of joy and unspeakable light, rise happily again to life from the sealed Tomb, even as at Thy Birth Thou didst come forth from the womb of Thy most holy Mother the Virgin Mary, without breaking the seal of her perpetual Virginity—a stupendous mystery, an unheard-of miracle, possible only to Thee as God, working concurrently with God the Holy Ghost.

And this is why Thou didst establish the Festival of Thy Resurrection to be for ever kept most holy, as brighter than the sun and more glorious than all the festivals of the year; and didst provide that by the faithful throughout the world it should be celebrated with joyful hearts and voices, in Hymns and Psalms, and with frequent Alleluias, and be most conspicuously honoured by joyous remembrance and thanksgiving.

At last, then, O Christ, my King, on this night, with Angels looking on, and rejoicing with Thee in Thy glorious triumph over death, and at the confounding of Hell, Thou didst mercifully open to us men an entrance into everlasting life, even as Thou hadst foretold to Thy disciples; and while they knew nothing about it, Thou didst joyfully clothe Thyself in Thy glorious Body. Then indeed did all the Powers of Darkness groan and gnash their teeth at beholding the brightness of Thy countenance in our human nature. There was a great earthquake also, and fear fell upon the armed guard of soldiers which was on watch at the Sepulchre; and they became as dead men when they felt the earth quake and saw the wondrous vision of Angels. For the Angel of the Lord, shining in whiteness like to snow, came down from Heaven and took away the great stone from the Tomb; so making ready a direct and safe path for the holy women, who were on their way to it, bearing precious spices to anoint once more their Jesus in the Sepulchre, that so they might safely draw near, and see that the Tomb was empty, and that their Lord was not there, but had risen.

I praise and magnify Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, Almighty King of Kings, Lord of Heaven and earth, Maker of all things, for Thy hard-won victory over Hell, and for the strong fetters with which Thou didst bind proud Lucifer, whom Thou didst cast into a burning lake of fire, of stinking sulphur and of pitch.

I praise and glorify Thee for the might with which Thou didst subdue the Devil's power for evil against the race of men, and didst prevent the demons from harming us as they please, which was what they were wont to do before Thy Incarnation and Passion. By a just judgement the wicked devices of the Jews in procuring Thy Crucifixion between two thieves, which they had instigated in the hope of destroying Thee, recoiled upon their own heads.

And now behold Thou art risen; Thou hast been victorious over the Kingdom of Hell; and by the sign of the holy Cross Thou hast broken in pieces all the power of the demons. Thou hast brought down their pride, and put it under the feet of the lowliest of Thy servants whom Thou hast chosen out of the world; for now all Christians, no matter what their rank may be, be they nobles or only common folk, rejoice in being signed with the sign of the Holy Cross, and bear it boldly on their foreheads in honour of Thy Name, as a defence against the fear of the old serpent, and against the scoffs of unbelieving Jews and heathens, who to this day hate the Name of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, Who was crucified for the salvation of the world.

I praise and honour Thee, O most gracious Jesus, for mercifully visiting in Limbo the Saints of the Old Dispensation, and for releasing all the faithful souls which were resting in Abraham's bosom. They indeed had long time anxiously looked for Thy descent into Hell, and with eyes full of tears were lovingly exclaiming, as we do now in this day's processional: "Thou art come, O loved One, Whom we have long waited for in our darkness; Thou art this night come to bring forth from the prison house those who were bound."

Lead thou, then, the chorus of joy, O Adam, our first parent, founder, so far as man can be said so to be, of the human race; rejoice thou, together with Eve thy wife of high renown, formed from thy side in Paradise! Rejoice; for Christ, a descendant of thy own, Virgin-born, and sacrificed upon the Cross, has come to deliver thee and all thy fellow-captive descendants, who have died trusting in Him, and in the hope of heavenly grace! Christ has come to deliver thee from the power of the grave, out of the house of bondage, out of the shadow of death, out of the den of lions, from the fear of the evil demons; and to bring thee and all the Saints of whom thou wert the progenitor, attended by the angels who were your dear

companions when on earth, amid songs of sweet rejoicing, into a Paradise of delight and of everlasting bliss.

Do thou too rejoice, O holy patriarch Abraham, father of many nations; rejoice thou with Sara, thy faithful wife, over the Incarnation of Christ, foretold to thee, and crowned with this Festival! This is the day which thou hast long expected, and wished to see. Firmly didst thou believe and therefore hast thou been found worthy to be made glad by beholding with thine own eyes Christ, born of thy seed, the Giver of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Do thou too rejoice, most ancient father Isaac, at the bright vision of Christ, and at His descent into Hell, concerning which, before thy death, thou didst prophecy; and when blessing thy son Jacob, didst in mysterious words beautifully point to Christ as of holy ones the most blessed, and didst speak His praises in these words: "Behold the smell of my son is as the smell of a plentiful field, which the Lord hath blessed. Cursed be he that curseth thee; and let him that blesseth thee be filled with blessings!"

Wherefore I too, on hearing and reading these things, give thanks to Thee, my God, and above the names of all the Saints, bless Thy sweet Name, O most sweet Jesus Christ, hoping that I may be found meet to be numbered by Thee among Thy chosen ones, to be filled with heavenly blessings, and to come at last to that Kingdom of joy in which the holy Angels dwell with Thee for ever.

Do thou too rejoice over this day, O mighty wrestler Jacob, chiefly for the heavenly glory and the benign glance of Jesus Christ, concerning which in days long past thou didst, when blessing thy sons, prophetically speak in these words of faith and prayer: "I will look for Thy salvation, O Lord!" O word truly sweet to the ear, and full of joy to the godly! O wholesome word, which in its inner meaning speaks of Jesus, long desired by Patriarchs and Prophets, patiently expected, and now at length shown forth before their eyes; for there is no other name under heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved, except this most sweet name of Jesus, which is blessed for ever above all things, from everlasting to everlasting! Yes, in very truth, Jesus Himself, the Salvation of God promised in the law, Who was born of a Virgin, Who suffered on the Cross, has risen again on the third day, and has fulfilled all things which the holy Patriarchs and all the Prophets had spoken concerning Him. Speak then now quite plainly, O holy Jacob, in the

joy of thy heart; say of Christ appearing in the glory of His Father in the sight of the angels of God: “I have seen my Lord face to face, and my soul has been saved!” What wouldst thou have more than this; and what greater happiness couldst thou desire? If on seeing one of God’s angels, thy joy was so great, what ought now thy joy to be when thou hast been found worthy to behold the Lord of Angels? If, when it was said to thee: “Joseph, thy son, is living, and he is ruler in all the land of Egypt,” thy spirit revived, how much greater now must be thy joy at Christ’s rising from the grave, never any more to die, but to reign for ever over all who dwell in Heaven and in earth?

O all ye holy Patriarchs and Prophets, O ye kings and rulers of the people, O young men and old, O virgins and faithful widows, O Priests and Levites, O Doctors and Scribes, O ye spirits and souls of the just, O ye holy and humble men of heart, rejoice ye all this day and be glad in Jesus Christ our Lord, Who has become our Salvation! Praise Him and magnify Him for ever; for He has Himself come to visit you, and to bring joy to the hearts of all who were waiting for the redemption of His people Israel!

And now, O most loving Lord Jesus Christ, true Refuge of my soul, in Whom now is, and throughout this uncertain life from youth to old age has been, all my trust, forsake me not, I pray Thee, poor and feeble as I am, in the trials and temptations which in so many ways beset me! Strengthen me, O my God, in every distress of my heart, through the merits of Thy most Holy Passion, and through the cruel sorrows and the abundant tears which were shed by Thy most blessed Mother, in her bitter grief as she stood beneath Thy Cross, and beheld Thy Wounds! Make me glad also, I pray Thee, on account of the merits of all Thy Saints who are so dear to Thee, Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles, and all the other Saints who are already in bliss with Thee in the Kingdom of Heaven!

Remember, O Lord, those Holy Words of Thine: “Many shall come from the East and the West, and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven!”—O Lord, Who on this day didst rise in Thy glorious Body from the Tomb, and hast steadfastly promised to all who love Thee the bliss of everlasting life with the Angels in Heaven, grant, I beseech Thee, that I may be admitted into that holy company, and may be allowed to sit at Thy heavenly Table—Who livest, etc.

CHAPTER II

Of the devout visitation of the Holy Sepulchre of our Lord Jesus Christ

O LORD JESUS CHRIST, Comforter of all who are sad and sorrowful, I bless Thee, and give thanks to Thee, for the pious visit to Thy Sepulchre of the holy women who came there early in the morning as soon as the sun was up, that they might make certain of what had been done there on that most holy night, blessed above all other holy nights.

I praise and heartily commend the pious zeal of those holy women, those noble ladies, who sought once more to anoint Thy most sacred Body, for hasting to rise so early, while it was yet dark; and for going in a body, with all possible privacy and decorum, to Thy Sepulchre, bearing the spices which they had prepared for anointing Thee. How great must have been their sorrow of heart, what floods of tears must they have shed, as they passed the Hill of Calvary, and beheld Thy Cross, as they contemplated the scene of Thy Passion, as they thought of all Thy Wounds! How great must have been the anxiety which oppressed them, and brought tears again to their eyes, when they caught sight of the Tomb and said one to another: “Who shall roll us back the stone from the door of the Sepulchre?” What wonder if they wept; for they must have felt sure that of themselves they could not move so heavy a stone. Fear would have made them retrace their steps, but love urged them on, and bade them not be alarmed at the guard of soldiers.—“Oh, had but Peter and John been here,” they will have said, “we might have depended on their ready help.”—The stone was indeed very great, so heavy that ten strong men could scarce have moved it. But, holy women, it was better that the Apostles should stay at home unnoticed, and pray for you that God would protect you and fulfil all your desire, than that

they should court danger by coming with you, and perhaps be killed by the soldiers. It would have added to your grief, and made your burden all the heavier to bear, if besides our Lord, His disciples had also been put to death.

What then will ye do, and whither go? Stop, I pray you, awhile and pray; fear not, but go bravely on your way; trust in the Lord that help may soon be sent you from above, and that good news may be brought you by an Angel, who knows what has come to pass as regards your Lord, laid yesterday in the Tomb. God knows your hearts, who ye are, and whence ye come: He knows Whom ye seek, what ye are carrying in your hands, and what ye are hiding under your mantles; for from the spices which you bear a sweet smell is going up before God into the Courts of Heaven, and the holy Angels are rejoicing in the sweetness of your holy prayers, and in that burning love ye have for Jesus, and are now showing forth in the work ye are doing for Him. Of a truth love knows no obstacles; it fears no one. Love presses ever onwards till it is in sight of the loved one. Make haste, then, go forward in silence, mark carefully the Tomb, and if it should be open, go boldly into it. If ye shrink from going in, bide awhile and pray, raise your eyes to Heaven, and besiege its gate, with your moans and tears, till the Angel of the Lord shall descend from Heaven, and shall say to you: "Fear ye not; for I know that ye seek Jesus Who was crucified; come and see the place where the Lord was laid. He is not here, as ye may see, He is risen, as He foretold you." If ye have remembered well His words, ye ought to have no doubt about His resurrection. It was love for Jesus which drew you out of the world; it was love for Jesus which has now led you to His Tomb. It was love for Jesus which made you mourn at His Passion; it is love for Jesus which will make you rejoice at His Resurrection. Wait but a little while and you shall see Him, and doubt shall be no longer possible. Look not for Him any more as lying in the grave; but seek Him as living with the Angels in Heaven: no more at the table of Martha in Bethany, but as sitting at the Right Hand of the Father in His Glory; no more as sailing in a small ship with Peter, but as reigning over all the choirs of Angels; no more as preaching on a mountain side, but as ruling over every creature in Heaven and on earth. Remember how He told you beforehand that the Son of Man must be crucified, and rise again the third day.

Depart now therefore consoled and comforted by the Angel. Go quickly and take the good news to the Lord's friends, tell the glad tidings to His

mourning disciples; bid them not despair because they all forsook Jesus and fled. Bid them hope for pardon; specially tell Peter, who thrice denied his Lord, and has since never ceased to weep bitterly, that he should not be fearful, but should trust to the great and never-failing love of Jesus, of which he has had so many proofs; tell him that this very day he shall see his Lord, and shall be full of joy. Tell him all the things which ye have seen and heard; for in very truth our Lord Jesus Christ has this night risen again.

O holy Peter, cease now to weep; rise up quickly and come, run with holy John, go boldly into the Tomb, and see lying there the linen clothes and the napkin of Jesus. Believe the word of the Angels, who say that Jesus is risen and is alive, and will go into Galilee, and will show Himself to His disciples. Be glad and rejoice with Christ, O holy Peter, chief shepherd of the Church, for He has risen again, Who is the Good Shepherd, Who vouchsafed to die upon the Cross for thee, and for the sheep of His flock. O sweet answer from the mouth of the Angel, so full of comfort for the hearts of those who mourn; so full of hope of pardon for poor sinners, from the example of blessed Peter, and of many other Saints, who after having fallen rose up again stronger than before. Blessed be God, Who never turns away His Face from those who are troubled in heart, but saves those who are of a humble spirit, and makes strong in faith those who look only to Him, and desire no other Comforter.

O holy women, ye who have heard all this good news concerning Jesus; should He meet you in the way and say to you, “Hail, my sisters!” clasp His Feet, and let Him not go till He has blessed you! Fall low upon your knees, adore Him, and greet Him with friendly words of peace, and that not for yourselves only, but for me too, a sinner humbly asking to be forgiven. Oh that the grace of shedding tears and of showing devotion such as yours when He appeared to you, might also be mine! I am full of hope that He will readily grant your prayers for me, because of the holiness of your merits, and of your diligence in the services which you have so often rendered to Him.

I praise and honour Thee, O most gracious Jesus, for Thy exceeding gentleness, and for the loving and comforting words with which Thou didst greet the holy women when they met Thee in the way, allowing them to clasp Thy most sacred Feet—those Feet Which were nailed to the Cross, Which are brighter than the sun, whiter than snow, lovelier than a

carbuncle, more precious than gold, sweeter smelling than any balm or chrism.

O Almighty Lord Jesus, I give Thee most hearty thanks for sending from Heaven Thy holy Angel to roll away the great stone from the Sepulchre; to drive away the heathen guard from that holy place where Thou didst safely rest, as a strong lion in his den; to prepare for the men and for the women who loved Thee free access to Thy Tomb; to comfort those who were bewailing Thee as dead and buried; to confirm and strengthen the halting faith of those who were doubting Thy Resurrection; and to rejoice with Thee at Thy happy return from Thy descent into Hell, and at the setting open of the gate of Heaven. Grief at Thy Crucifixion had taken such full possession of the hearts of those holy women, that they had quite given up hoping for Thy Resurrection, in spite of Thy having so often foretold it. Nowhere could they have found comfort, had they not visited Thy Sepulchre that morning; had they not heard from the mouth of the Angel that in very truth Thou hadst risen; had they not in confirmation of the truth seen Thee with their own eyes, and clasped with their own hands Thy glorious Feet. But when all these things had been done, Thou didst add to the comfort Thou hadst given them by Thy loving greeting of them, and by laying upon them a joyful duty—a duty worthy of all acceptance and honour—lovingly consoling and encouraging them with the words: “Fear not; go, tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, there they shall see Me.”

How delightful are those words to the ear, how sweet are they to the mind, how profitable are they for meditation, and for taking the place of gossip about the things of this world! How bright must have been the eyes that had seen the Lord, how pure the hands that had touched Jesus, how holy the lips that had printed on Him a kiss. How swift in walking and how quick in running must have been made the feet; how prompt in obedience must have been made the hearts; how joyful must have been made the lips of those who were bidden to tell the disciples that the Lord was risen. Great as was that Good Friday burden of sorrows when the ignominious Cross of Jesus was seen upon the Hill of Calvary, out of all proportion greater far must have been the joys of that first Easter Day, when the glorious tidings of His Resurrection were made known. The reproach of the Jews is turned into the exceeding great joy of the Apostles; the offence of the Cross has become the means of everlasting salvation; the tears of the Saints have

given place to the songs of Angels; and the wounds made by the scourging and the nails have won for us the remission of our sins.

O most sweet Jesus Christ, kindle also in my heart, I pray Thee, the love of Thy Holy Name, more precious than that of all the Saints in Heaven and in earth; that so, with Mary Magdalene and her companions, I may remember it every morning at the break of day, and may seek Thee in the sepulchre of my heart; may be utterly dead to the things of this world, and may cling devoutly to Thee in the silence and the solitude of prayer. Keep my heart from being hard, my body from being slothful, my eyes from being drowsy. Give me the grace of true contrition, fill me with the joy of true devotion, that so I may worthily celebrate, at this sacred Feast, the glory of Thy Holy Name. Receive, at the hands of the holy Angels, who full of reverence and awe keep guard over Thy Sepulchre, the first-fruits of my lips as a sacrifice of never-ending praise; and may those same Angels faithfully defend me by day and by night from every danger, whether of body or of soul.

And be Thou, O Lord, ever at my side, and chiefly at the hour of prayer, that wandering eyes and vain fancies may not lead me astray during the Divine Office, and cause me to forget Thee in Thy holy Place. Of a truth it is there especially that I ought, as a prayerful suppliant, caught up to Heaven, and forgetful for Thy sake of the things of earth—it is there especially that, as far as may be, made one in a pure heart with Thee, I ought with the utmost awe and recollectedness to approach Thy glorious Presence. For what are the things of this world but vanity of vanities? Truly, as compared with the joys of Heaven, earthly gladness is in Thy sight a thing of nought. Therefore, O my God, Thou Who art the Crown and the Glory of the Angelic host, grant, I beseech Thee, that I may ponder the words of the psalms, and of the other hymns and canticles, as they are said or sung in Church, and may take in their meaning, so far as in my human frailty I am able to grasp and understand it: and so be Thou with me till it is given me to stand before Thee, Who art the true Light, Who wilt then make light all that now within me is dark, and wilt make glad with perfect joy all the citizens of the Heavenly Jerusalem. Receive, I pray Thee, at my hands on the holy day of this great festival, in place of sweet-smelling ointment made of myrrh and frankincense, the many and bitter inward groanings of my heart for all my sins and negligences of thought, of word and of deed;

that so as a new man, born again of the Spirit, clothed in white, and humbly confessing my sins, I may be found meet to appear with joy and gladness among Thy Saints. Hereupon, then, I offer to Thee, instead of costly spices confected of balsam and honey, all the loving desires of my heart and all the pious exercises of all Religious in praise of the Holy Trinity, and in honour of Thy joyful Resurrection, in union with the song of angels and the rejoicing of all the Saints who stand before Thee in Heaven. Amen.

A Prayer to the holy Angels, who watch over us in our life on earth

O holy Angels and Archangels, ministers of the Heavenly King, ye who are clothed in white raiment, ye who are fulfilled with those good gifts which last for ever, take pity, I pray you, upon me a poor weak sinner; and obtain for me, both now and always, God's help in my pilgrimage and exile upon earth; succour and defend one who is poor and destitute; and to one who is weak bring power to withstand the wiles of the devil and his own sinful lusts. Put upon me white robes, build me up in holy ways, in faith, and in hope and in the love of God; strengthen me in the inward man that I may grow in grace, weeping with those who weep, rejoicing with those who rejoice, and giving thanks always for all good works done anywhere for the honour of God; that so God, Who is all in all, may be blessed, praised and exalted for ever. Amen.

CHAPTER III

Of the appearance of Jesus to Mary Magdalene in the form of a gardener

I BLESS Thee, and give thanks to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, Maker of all things, to Whom all hearts are open, and from Whom no secrets are hid, for Thy kindly appearance to Thy ardent lover Mary Magdalene, as she stood weeping by Thy Tomb, what time Thou didst vouchsafe to show Thyself to her in the form of a gardener, to reveal to her, of Thy special grace, many secret things of Thy Godhead and mysteries of Thy Manhood, making known to her first of all Thy creatures the certainty of Thy glorious Resurrection, and in place of her tearful lamentings and many questionings, bestowing upon her abundant joy and gladness.

I praise and magnify Thee for Thy loving appearance, and for the gentle words which Thou didst speak, to the disconsolate Mary Magdalene, when Thou didst question her and say: “Why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou?”

O good Jesus, O most sweet Master, Who knowest all things before they come to pass, why dost Thou ask of her that which Thou knowest full well? Thou knowest that what she is seeking and longing for is that which indeed beyond all else she loves, Thyself alone. It is because in the Tomb she found Thee not, because she has lost that which in all the world was most precious to her, that she weeps, and is sad. As often as she thinks of Thee, as often as she hears Thee spoken of, as often as she sees Thy Tomb, or calls to mind Thy Cross, or anything else that has had to do with Thee, that moment her heart sinks within her, and she weeps; for love knows no rest till it finds what it has been seeking, possesses what it loves, and holds fast what it has been longing for.

Be not angry then, O Lord, if even on so high a festival as this holy Easter Day, she sheds tears in Thy presence. It is her love for Thee; it is her great devotion to Thee, which has given her no sleep nor rest, which has driven her from her couch before the break of day that she might come and anoint Thee—it is these things which have made her as Thou seest. It is because she has not found Thee that she weeps, and that her grief on Thy account is so intense. With so great love does she burn, with such intense longing is she on fire, that had she but an Angel's wings she would fly to Thee over mountains and hills and above the stars of heaven. Higher than the Cherubim and the Seraphim in Heaven would she mount in search of Thee, if only she might find Thee in Thy Kingdom, if only she might see Thee sitting on Thy Throne at the Right Hand of the Father. But to-day this happy lot may not be hers; nor indeed to all is it given to be caught up with Paul into the third Heaven, but only to those for whom it is prepared by Thy Father, and at the proper time, that namely which has been foreordained of God.

O loving Jesus, Comforter of those who mourn, have pity on Mary in her grief, come to the help of her who mourns, speak to her who loves Thee. Speak but one word, and her sorrow will have an end. Tell her but Thy name, let but Thy voice sound in her ears, and straightway her grief will be assuaged. Show her the Light of Thy Countenance, most beauteous Lord Jesus, and most sweetly will her soul rejoice in Thee. Call her by her name, and on the instant her tears will cease to flow.

Why, I ask, O Lord, why hidest Thou Thy Face from her who loves Thee, from her who seeks Thee so anxiously, from her who laments Thee so bitterly? When in very deed Thou art her beloved Lord, and her Master, her Lord in Thy authority over her, her Master in teaching her, why dost Thou pretend to be other than Thou art, why dost Thou feign to be the gardener? Say to her, then, I pray Thee: "I am Jesus Whom thou seekest; be still and weep no more; go in peace!"

Nay, good Jesus, what is Thy purpose in all this, why dost Thou not satisfy the longing of her soul? I know that Thou doest and orderest all things well. I know that Thou neither deceivest nor canst be deceived; for Thou art a just God, loving and true in all Thy ways. Surely it was in order that Thou mightest stir up yet more her longing after Thee, in order that Thou mightest make trial of the strength of her patience, and in order that

by affliction and delay Thou mightest purify her soul, and mightest after long-protracted grief and many tears lead her to yet greater joy. Surely it was for all this that Thou didst hide from sorrowing Mary the brightness of Thy Countenance, and didst keep her from knowing Thee.

And in all this, surely, Thou didst intend the example of holy Mary's patience and repentance to be to all Thy faithful servants in distress a source of great comfort. Mary was very dear to Thee, and she was adorned with many excellent gifts, but for all that she was in this life often in trouble and distress, often heavy-laden, often forsaken for a season. But this was in order that her merits might become greater, and that other Christians might profit by her example: never was she altogether forsaken, never forgotten.

How wisely, O Lord, and how tenderly, dost Thou deal with Thy loved ones, whether Thou sendest them trials, or givest them consolation—both of which Thou dost in order to lead them to Thyself, and to the everlasting rest of the heavenly Paradise. They must needs be tried by manifold temptations, and be purified like gold in the fire of tribulation: and if they would be made fit for the Kingdom of God, and worthy of the beatific vision, they must take everything that comes from Thy Hand as a priceless boon, and as a pledge of that everlasting life which Thou hast promised to every faithful soul that does not cease to weep and to pray, as did Mary Magdalene on this day before Thee.

How good art Thou, O God of Israel, to those who are of a right spirit, to those who seek Thee humbly and truly, with sorrow and with tears, as Mary sought Thee and found Thee. The more laboriously a thing has been sought after, the greater the difficulty in finding it, the more will it be cherished, the more carefully will it be guarded. The longer a man has gone without food the more will he relish it: a bitter draught makes any water taste sweet. We love daylight because night has gone before it; it is when we have been cold that we most love a fire. Joyous music gives us the greatest pleasure when sadness has gone before it: hard work gives us the most refreshing rest and sleep. The fiercer the war, the more welcome is peace. Stars are at their brightest when a misty sky becomes clear; birds sing their merriest as the sun rises. Even so, when Christ with His peace is at hand the soul which has been in trouble is renewed like the eagle. All this is well seen in the case of the beloved Mary Magdalene, who having wept much was

abundantly comforted of the Lord. “O how great is Thy goodness, O Lord, which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee.”

“Verily Thou art a God that hidest Thyself,” as saith Isaias, and besides Thee there is none other like Thee, knowing how to order all things so wisely for Thy loved ones. O good Jesus, eternal Wisdom of the Father, in what humility and in what love didst Thou live Thy life among men, teaching them what was wholesome and profitable for them; to despise earthly things, to love heavenly things, and to endure adversity!

How sweet was Mary’s discourse with Jesus, the Saviour of the world, the King of Angels, the Lord of lords, the Prince of the citizens of Heaven, the Ruler of the ages. Of a truth, Lord, had Mary known Thee fully, she would never have thought Thee to be the gardener; she would never have addressed Thee as a stranger, asking what Thou wert doing there, or of what Thou wert in search. “Sir,” she said, “if thou hast taken Him hence, tell me.” O Mary, how canst thou so speak to Him, the greatness of Whose power Thou knowest not. Whence dost thou take courage to say boldly: “I will take Him away.” How canst thou venture to think that of thyself thou canst lift such and so great a man? Tell me whither dost thou wish to take Him? Who gave thee leave to take away that which thou hadst not put there? Thou knowest not what thou sayest. Call thy companions and see whether, as thou sayest, ye could, all of you together, carry Him Whom ye seek. Ye will scarce be able, for ye are tired with your long walk, and weak from your two days’ fast, and with weeping for Christ, Whose sacred Body ye cannot find. O Mary, if the others have gone away, and thou art alone, what wilt thou do? Ask that Gardener to help thee in thy search for Him Who is so dear to thee, and in carrying Him Whom thou lovest, and art seeking with so many sighs and tears. No one can help thee better, or comfort thee more fully than that Gardener; no one, if He would only say so, knows better than He whither thy Lord has been taken, or where He is hidden. I suspect that it was pity for thee that brought Him to thee, in order that He might Himself tell thee where He Whom thou seekest is to be found, and Who it was that during the night removed Him from the Tomb.

How intense was the longing of this holy woman, who never stopped searching and weeping! Speak, Lord, I pray Thee, but one short word to her, so that Thy dove on hearing Thy Voice, may know Thee, and for joy at finding her Spouse may raise her voice in song and dry her tears. Thou art

He Whom she is seeking: Thou art He Whom she longs for; Angels, creatures, and human comfort of what kind soever, satisfy her not. Speak, Lord, and how willingly will Thy handmaid, Thy faithful attendant, hear Thee. Say to her, as Thou wert often wont to say to Thy beloved hostess: “Mary!” That is her name; and so she would rather be called by Thee than by any one else, for Thou art her only Hope. More she does not want; Thou art her all in all.

O Mary, know Jesus, by Whom thou art known; love Him Who first loved thee. Make answer, loved one, to thy beloved Master, to the Gardener after thine own heart: “Rabboni, my Lord, I thank Thee for appearing to me. Now I possess what I sought, now I behold Him Whom I bewailed, and better far is my lot than I could ever have hoped it would be.”

How happy was the day, how blessed was the hour in which, O Mary, after Angels had been seen by thee and had spoken to thee, thou wast found worthy to behold the Lord of Angels, and to hear His sweet voice saying to thee: “Go to My brethren and say to them: I ascend to My Father, and to your Father, to My God and your God.”

Mary therefore did as Jesus had commanded her, and full of joy, went forthwith, without a moment’s delay, without a murmur, to tell the disciples the good news that after her prolonged sorrow and her many tears, she had seen her Lord.

How pleasing and acceptable were those tears coming from a heart that was pure, from a love that was fervent, sweeter surely far than the precious spices in their alabaster box got ready for the anointing.

And now, O most merciful Christ Jesus, Who didst vouchsafe to visit and to comfort holy Mary Magdalene when she was overwhelmed with sorrow and distress, I entreat Thee by the bowels of Thy mercy, that when my soul is weary and sad; or is heavy laden by reason of some bodily trouble, or of sorrow of heart, due either to my having given way to temptation, or to the unnoticed withdrawal from me of the sweetness of Thy grace, or to some fault which I have committed, better known to Thee than to myself; or when an evil conscience oppresses me with the thought of judgement to come, and fills me with alarm on account of my daily negligences and coldness of heart, in respect of many duties left undone, or made worthless by being mixed up with idle vanities—when any of these things come upon me, show to me also, I beseech Thee, mercy like to that which Thou

showedst to holy Mary Magdalene. Withdraw not, I pray Thee, O Lord, Thy Hand from me when I am in trouble; and suffer me not to doubt of the pardon of my sins. Of Thy unspeakable bounty, take me, I pray Thee, to the Bosom of Thy mercies; for they endure from everlasting to everlasting upon all such as with their whole heart seek Thee, and desire to love Thee. Of Thy wonted lovingkindness extend to me once more the grace of Thy holy comfort, for which I long with my whole heart; and moved by the prayers and by the tears of holy Magdalene, show to me when my soul departs from my body, the saving joy of the light of Thy Countenance. Amen.

CHAPTER IV

Of the great merits, and privileges of grace, of blessed Mary Magdalene

I BLESS Thee, and give thanks to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, heavenly Physician, Who for the Salvation of our souls, didst come into this world to redeem sinners, and to draw them with the cords of Thy love, by the path of repentance, to Thy heavenly Kingdom. Thou Who didst vouchsafe to be born of Mary, the Virgin, didst think no scorn of being touched, of being washed, of being wiped, of being anointed, and of being kissed by Mary, a sinner, when she wept and repented. O loving Jesus, Son of the living God, merciful Saviour of mankind, Thou didst in this life mercifully bestow great privileges of grace upon most blessed Mary Magdalene: when she had turned her back upon the vain things of the world, and had been converted to Thee, Thou didst graciously accept her penitence; Thou didst fully pardon all her sins; and while she bewailed them with tears, Thou didst freely remit their punishment. Thou didst breathe into her heart that great contrition which she felt; Thou didst save her from losing hope of forgiveness by filling her sorrowing heart with the comfort of Thy grace. Thou didst set her soul on fire with Thy Holy Spirit, and didst inwardly refresh it with the sweetness of Thy love. Thou didst bid her go in peace in full trust in Thy mercy; Thou didst warn her against going back to her former way of life, and didst bid her be steadfast in all manner of holy conversation, and in fervent prayer. Not one harsh word didst Thou ever speak to her, never didst Thou taunt her with her sin, never didst Thou tell any one what she had done; nay, rather Thou didst make excuses for her, and didst put forward her good deeds as an example of holy life. When Thou wast the guest of Simon the leper, Thou didst take more pleasure in

Mary's tears than in all the dainty food set before Thee by the Pharisee. Thou didst not shrink from her touch; nor didst Thou spurn her when she anointed Thee. Thou didst put forward Thy Feet, and didst bow down Thy Head for her; Thou didst not disdain her kisses. With Thy Lips Thou didst bless her, with Thy Hand Thou didst sanctify her; by Thy touch Thou didst cleanse her, by a few short words Thou didst make her whole, saying to her: "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." O what sweet words are these! They come from the mouth of God; they are full of grace and mercy; they are ever to be gratefully remembered.

Thou didst accept the hospitality of Mary and Martha as that of friends dear to Thee; Thou didst lodge and take Thy rest in their house, and they ever made Thee welcome. There didst Thou eat and drink whatever was set before Thee and Thy disciples, though it was only such as was fit for poor and needy men who had but little money in their common purse: in that house there was no disorder, no noise, no silly jesting, no loud laughter, no unprofitable talk to be heard. Humble as Thou hadst made Thyself, yet as Master, in demeanour sober and decorous, Thou didst preside at table; having made Thyself poor, Thou didst share the meals of poor folk: Thou wast their Refection-Reader and Theologian; and instead of wine Thou didst set before the friends who were so dear to Thee the words of Eternal Life. Martha, busy as she was with household affairs, Thou didst discreetly instruct; and for Mary who took less part in such things, but sat peacefully at Thy Feet, drinking in the words which fell from Thy Lips, Thou didst make loving excuse. When her sister complained of being left alone to serve, Thou didst praise Mary's higher life of contemplation: and when the traitor Judas found fault about the ointment which she had poured out upon Thee, Thou didst declare her free from blame. She modestly held her peace; but Thou at once madest answer on her behalf, reciting her good deed, and being silent as to what she had done wrong. When Mary wept over her brother Lazarus lying dead in his tomb, Thou didst weep with her, and Thou didst so join his friends in their grief that many of them said: "Behold how He loved him!" Of what good report must that Lazarus have been, and how pure must have been his life, for Jesus to have loved him when he was alive, to have raised him when he was dead, to have supped with him after he was restored to life!

O loving Jesus, Who art both the Author and the Rewarder of every good deed, Thou didst not forget the faithful service so often done to Thee in the house of Mary and Martha; small kindnesses Thou didst repay by great; for good deeds done to Thee in the body Thou didst return spiritual blessings; things earthly Thou didst reward with things eternal. What shall I say more? Words cannot express, the mind cannot realize, all Thy good gifts to men, all the miracles and signs wrought by Thee in Galilee, in Nazareth, in Bethany, in Jerusalem, in Judaea, and throughout the Holy Land, before the eyes of Thy disciples and of all men, in witness of the truth; that so by reason of all Thy divine and wondrous words and deeds they might believe that Thou art indeed the Christ, the Son of God, Who camest into the world to be the Saviour of mankind. How highly exalted in Heaven art Thou, Who upon earth wert so lowly! How humble and how loving wert Thou amongst men when Thou didst heal them: how stern, and how terrible wert Thou to the demons when Thou didst cast them out! How full of mercy wert Thou to the penitent, how strict wert Thou with evil-doers, how compassionate wert Thou to the afflicted, how kind to those in want, how consoling to those who were in grief! Where among men can be found a friend so faithful, where so powerful a helper in every time of need as Thou, our God? How great was the joy which Thou didst give to those sisters when Thou criedst with a loud voice: "Lazarus, come forth!" And presently he that had been dead came forth, obedient to the word spoken by Thee, the Lord of life and death. And then Thou saidst to Thy disciples, as having in Thy stead the cure of souls: "Loose him and let him go."

O my Lord, vouchsafe, I pray Thee, to loose me also from the chains of all my sins, that so I may meet death without fear, may come to Thee with joy, may join the holy Angels and Mary and Martha in praising Thee for ever, and may never more fall into sin. Amen.

CHAPTER V

Of holy Mary Magdalene's great sorrow of heart at the Passion of the Lord

ALL praise and glory be to Thee, O most sweet Jesus Christ, for the exceeding holiness of Mary Magdalene, and for her devout lamentation at Thy most sacred and most bitter Passion. For her it was not enough to have attended Thee in Thy life on earth, and to have followed Thee through towns and villages witnessing the signs and miracles, worthy of all praise and honour, which Thou didst work by Thy Divine power; but in Thy Passion she never left Thee, but followed Thee weeping to the Cross's foot, and was with holy Mary Thy Mother, and the many other devout and holy women, who with bitter tears compassionated Thee as Thou wentest on Thy way to Calvary, sorrowing for the burden of the Cross which Thou hadst to bear, and for the cruel death to which, all-innocent as Thou wert, Thou hadst been condemned. So long therefore as Thou wert in sight, she followed Thy Cross weeping, sobbing, and lamenting; she marked Thy every step, and passed along wringing her hands, beating her breast, and wiping her eyes, while copious floods of tears poured down her cheeks; for she felt that in no better way could she show her love, no otherwise could she be of any use, than by showing the deepest sorrow of heart, by weeping bitterly all day and all night, and by never forgetting the pain and the anguish which Thou hadst to endure. She felt every Wound of Thine as if it had been her own, and the more she loved Thee the more vehement was her grief, the more copious were her tears. When she saw Thee stripped naked and nailed to the Cross, she stood with Thy Mother at its foot, as close to it as she dared; and in spite of the intense anguish of her grief, for nothing in the world would she leave Thy Cross; to Thee and to Thy Mother she clung

most faithfully until Thy death. When she heard Thy loud cry, and saw Thee die upon the Cross, so overwhelmed was she with grief that her soul fainted within her. Nourishment she could not take; sleep forsook her eyes. Tears were her only meat; to live longer deprived of Thee seemed to her a lot too hard to bear. Had she not been in all things submissive to Thy Will, she could after Thy death have endured life no longer. Her constant lamentations show that without Thee this life had no joy for her.

But, Mary, for the sake of thy loved One as He hangs upon the Cross, refrain thyself this once, I pray thee, for a while, and support the Mother of Jesus and her sisters in their hour of grievous need. Think not of forsaking the Mother; think not of leaving the side of the most sorrowful Virgin Mother of Jesus, as if thou couldst no longer bear to look upon grief so intense, or to hear moans so piteous. Grieve with those who grieve, weep with those that weep, that so in the glory of the Resurrection thou mayest rejoice with them that rejoice.

O good and most loving Jesus, Mary did as Thou hadst bidden her. As Thou saidst to her, and commandedst her before Thy Death, she kept what was left of the ointment in order that she might therewith anoint Thy Body for Its burial. She did not sell it, as Judas would have had her, for she did not forget Thy words; but she kept it in the alabaster box, and bought yet more of it, so making preparation for Thy needs. Of a truth a friend is proved in distress; true love is shown in the action which it prompts. And so it was that this holy and most faithful Mary proved how she loved Thee in life by the depth of her grief, and by the loving care for Thee which she showed in all that she did for Thee after death in the matter of Thy burial. Not a single thing did she leave undone of all that was needed for the reverent burial of Thy sacred Body. She swathed It, she anointed It, she covered It up, she bound It round, she sewed up the linen cloths, she reverently placed upon Thy sacred Head a napkin as Its fitting covering. All the while that she was doing this she wept unceasingly: her only comfort was the thought that she was found meet to join Thy other followers in attending upon Thee and upon Thy Mother, and that she was able to see all things about Thee rightly done. When at length Thy most sacred Body had been laid in the Tomb, and the entrance to it had been firmly closed and sealed, there was a fresh outburst of grief and lamentation; for she thought that never again in this life would she see Thee, with Whom she had but a

short while since enjoyed such fellowship of spiritual life and joy. Nor, even when the Tomb had been closed, could she at once leave the place where her earthly Treasure lay hid: till sundown she sat there mourning in company with many other faithful women, till at length tears failed them; and even then they poured forth from the recesses of their hearts sighs of love, even as it is written of them: “The women sitting over against the Tomb wept and sorrowed for the Lord.”

Oh that to me also it might be given in such wise to compassionate Thee, O my Lord Jesus Christ, when I meditate on Thy Passion, as did devout Mary Magdalene on that Good Friday when she saw Thee crucified, dead, and buried, and of all men, as it were, set at nought, mocked, and blasphemed. But, thanks be to Thee, O most patient Jesus, this untrue report concerning Thee was but short-lived; for after three days Thou didst conquer, and didst confound Thy enemies by rising again victorious over death. Of a truth, Lord, those words of Thine were fulfilled which Thou spakest beforehand concerning Mary Magdalene, in the presence of Thy disciples, in praise of her good deeds, saying: “Amen, I say to you, wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, that also which she hath done shall be told for a memory of her.” Of a truth Thy whole house is filled with the odour of the ointment; that is to say the whole Church of the faithful, spread abroad throughout the world, is instructed by the teaching of the Apostles, and is animated by Divine truth. For the renown of Mary’s great sanctity is set forth in the writings of apostles and evangelists, and is consequently proclaimed far and wide by Doctors and preachers; and year by year her glorious festival is celebrated and honoured in Holy Church with special devotion by all the Clergy and by the people of either sex, upon the day on which her most blessed soul passed from this world to dwell with Thee, our Lord Jesus Christ, in Thy everlasting tabernacles. Amen.

CHAPTER VI

Of the joyful and loving appearance of Christ to His Mother when she had withdrawn to her secret chamber

I BLESS Thee, and give thanks to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son of God, Incarnate and Born for our Salvation of Mary the Virgin, for Thy glorious and most true Resurrection, made as on this day, and chiefly for that most joyful and secret appearance which Thou didst vouchsafe to make to Thy holy Mother Mary, as she was praying in the secret chamber of her house, and with intense longing and firm faith was looking for Thy coming. To her first of all, before appearing to any of Thy holy friends, or to any of the holy women who ministered to Thee and were so beloved by Thee, didst Thou graciously appear. Thou didst reverently greet her; Thou didst most sweetly console and comfort her, and Thou didst abundantly rejoice her heart by Thy bodily presence clad in the shining and glorious robe of Thy immortality.

From what we know of Thy tender love it is right and just that we should think that this was so, and that we should believe it for the honour of Thy most Holy Mother; for Thou art loving and full of mercy in all Thy works, and Thou didst command us to honour our parents, and to comfort mourners. This then is to be piously believed by all the faithful, that before any one else Thou didst first of all visit Thy most holy Mother, who was sorrowing deeply at Thy Passion; and by Thy presence didst dispel all her grief and sorrow, and didst fill her heart with joy.

And although she did not go with the other devout women to visit Thy Sepulchre, it was not from want of love, nor from fear, nor from excessive

grief that she failed in this duty; but it was because she knew for certain that Thou wouldst rise again. She stayed at home in the sure hope that on the third day Thou wouldst come to her; and so, engaged meanwhile in holy prayers, she longingly awaited Thy coming. She deserved therefore to be the first to see Thee, Whom she loved and longed for more than all the world besides, in Whom she believed with a faith which knew no doubt at all. For if, because she believed the Angel Gabriel's message, when he announced to her the sacred mystery of the Incarnation, Mary was called blessed, and was so highly commended, how supremely blessed and to be commended was she for believing in Thee, her Son, Flesh of her flesh, in all Thy works; and for wavering not one whit, but standing firm when others were doubting.

How unspeakable was the joy with which holy Mary, Thy Mother, was filled in that hour when she saw Thee, her Son, adorned with dazzling splendour, and in a Body more glorious than the brightness of the sun, and exceeding in beauty all the stars of Heaven. How intensely and how heartily did her spirit rejoice in Thee, O Jesus, her Lord and her Salvation, on that day above every other day of her life in this world. How eagerly did she gaze at Thy glorious Body, that Body which a short while ago she had wept at seeing cruelly scourged and nailed to the Cross, which she had seen pierced in Its right side by Longinus' lance, and had afterwards laid in the Sepulchre as a Corpse. Deservedly, then, is Mary, whose heart at Thy Passion was rent with a keener grief than those of others, whose tears had been more copious than those of others, and whose grief had moved many others to weep with her—deservedly then is Mary to-day made happy above her wont by seeing Thee in glory; deservedly is she filled with new comfort. This, O Lord, was the moment when Thou didst bring to pass that word of Thine, which at the Supper Thou didst speak for the comfort of Thy Apostles (and didst assuredly make known to Thy afflicted Mother), saying: "I will not leave you orphans: I will come to you, and will see you again; and your heart shall rejoice; and your joy no man shall take from you."

Thou hast indeed done well, O most kind Jesus, in visiting as a Son Thy dearly loved Mother, in greeting her reverently, in speaking to her sweetly, in comforting her heartily, in showing to her the joy of Thy countenance, in driving away from her all sadness, and in wiping away all tears of sorrow from her eyes. For no sooner had she seen Thee than all sorrow and sighing

fled away, and when Thou spakest to her heart, the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, abode more intimately with her than even with the Apostles, making, so to say, her soul drunk with joy. Thou Who formerly, at her request, didst at the Marriage Feast turn water into the best wine, now on Thy return from Hell, and by Thy victory over Thy enemies, didst with yet greater power, and by a greater miracle, change death into life, the cross into glory, Thy Mother's tears into gladness, and Thy disciples' fear into everlasting joy.

Thou didst not send an Angel, nor even an Archangel; not Michael, nor Gabriel, nor Raphael, Thy glorious messengers; nor any noble earthly knights, gorgeous to behold, clad in gold and silver and in precious stones, to wait upon our dear Lady, Thy Mother, the Queen of Heaven; but, Thou, O King of Glory, Jesus Christ, Thou camest Thyself in person, early in the morning before the break of day, unseen of men, without a messenger to announce Thee, to visit Thy most blessed Mother, as she knelt instant in prayer, and awaited full of faith Thy return in Thy glorious Body from the Tomb. For she knew that all things must be fulfilled even as Thou hadst Thyself foretold, and as the holy prophets had long ago spoken of Thy Passion and Thy Resurrection. Of a truth this is the day which Thou hast made a Day of Gladness; a day rightly and deservedly to be esteemed more holy, more illustrious, more celebrated and more joyful than all other days in the year.

With all Thy holy ones in Heaven, and with all Thy devout and faithful ones upon earth, I praise and honour Thee for the sweet converse and the secret conference, which Thou hadst with Thy holy and dearly loved Mother Mary in her chamber, into which no noise of the world could come; where Thou didst discuss with her Divine mysteries concerning the Kingdom of God, the joys of Paradise, the choirs of Angels, and the holy souls redeemed from Hell and given a share in the joys of Paradise along with Enoch and Elias.

Oh that I had been there, and had heard Thy sweet words; that I had secretly stood near the window, and had listened attentively, unseen by the eye of man, to every word which fell from the lips of my Lord Jesus Christ as He talked with His Mother about the joys of the citizens of heaven. With what intense gladness would my heart have rejoiced in the Lord, could I, for my comfort in my earthly pilgrimage, so full of dangers as it is, have

remembered even one or two words of that sacred converse! But perchance what passed was what man may not utter, which ought to be kept secret, which ought to be meditated on in the joyous music of the heart alone. Blessed is he who knows that music, who by meditation rises above all earthly things, who is busy all day with Jesus and Mary, and neither cares, nor thinks, about what is going on in the world.

It seems to me that no mortal man was worthy of being present at this converse, but only the holy Angels, and the souls of the just who follow their Lord with reverence and with joy whithersoever He goes. Perchance too that conference was so exalted and so heavenly, and that visit to the Mother's humble dwelling was so surpassingly sweet, that neither were the Apostles allowed at that time to enter it, nor could they have taken in the wondrous mysteries which Jesus, glorified of the Father, then discussed with His Mother, blessed Mary full of grace. Rather therefore, O Lord Jesus, would I leave all those things to Thee and to Thy holy Angels, humbly asking forgiveness of all my sins and shortcomings from Thee, Who makest known to babes Thy hidden treasures, and feedest starvelings with the bread of Heaven.

O most gracious Lord Jesus Christ, Who after Thy bitter Passion and joyful Resurrection didst appear calm and joyous, in all the brightness of Thy glorified Body, to Thy most holy Mother Mary, and in place of her trouble and distress didst fill her heart with new and unspeakable gladness, have mercy, I pray Thee, upon me, Thy poor weak suppliant, who am so often sorely troubled in my earthly pilgrimage.

Lo, I fall low before Thee this day; full of affection I keep on knocking at the door of Thy loving Mother, and I pray that in the time of my affliction Thou wouldst vouchsafe to come into the secret place of my heart, to console and comfort me, and to preserve me, on the one hand from undue sadness, and on the other from unbecoming joyousness.

Kindle in my heart, I beseech Thee, and keep alive in it renewed fervour and greater devotion and thankfulness to Thee, that so I may learn to turn my back upon all the vanities of this world, to seek the things which are above, to choose like Mary the things which are eternal, to meditate on the things of God, and to rejoice in Thee alone. Oh that to me, poor and of no account as I am, it might be given to ponder these things more earnestly than ever before, and to tarry longer with Jesus my Lord; that so the whole

world and those who love it may become distasteful to me, and I may be able to shut them out of my sight.

O most sweet Jesus, mayest Thou, together with Thy most sweet Mother Mary, and Thy holy Angels, be more pleasing and delightful to me than all else besides; kindle, I pray Thee, in my inmost heart the fire of Thy love; come oftener to visit me, and bless me more and more abundantly; keep me devoted to Thee; and when the trials and troubles of this life are over, bring me safely to that heavenly Kingdom, where Thou livest and reignest, etc.

CHAPTER VII

Of the appearance of Christ to St. Peter in secret; and of St. Peter's running with St. John to the Sepulchre

I BLESS Thee, and give thanks to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, Chief Shepherd of Holy Church, and faithful High Priest to God for us, for the surpassing love and unspeakable mercy which in so many different ways Thou didst manifest to Thy most blessed Apostle Peter; for the Divine words which Thou spakest to him; and for the secret visions, which Thou didst so often show forth to him. Thou didst choose him rather than any of the other Apostles to be the Prince and Shepherd of the souls of the faithful; Thou didst make him their head; and after Thy departure from this world to Thy heavenly Father, Thou didst leave him as Thy Vicar, and keeper of the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven.

O Fountain of mercies, and inexhaustible Source, whence heavenly gifts flow down upon penitents, and upon those who weep over sins committed; O most loving Bestower of pardon, and Giver of heavenly grace; O Lord Jesus Christ, Who to all Thy Saints, and to Thy friends whom Thou didst choose before the foundation of the world, art sweet and beloved; O Thou Who never ceasest to bless, and to shed Thy favours upon, those who run after Thee, who are truly contrite, and who humbly ask forgiveness; O most gracious Lord, in spite of his thrice-repeated denial of Thee Thou didst not withdraw from Peter Thy love, but straightway by Thy gracious look Thou didst bring back to himself, and cause him to weep bitterly; Thou didst mercifully and fully pardon all his sin against Thee; and in spite of his

grievous fall, Thou didst restore him to his former rank and to his pontifical dignity.

I praise and highly exalt Thee for that surpassing love of Thine which caused Thee to appear this day, in some secret place better known to Thee than to me, to holy Peter, Thy muchloved Apostle, for his special comfort, at that time so greatly needed by him; for he who had most offended most needed help and comfort; and no better Comforter, no more powerful Guardian of the soul can be than Thou art, O Jesus, our Maker and Redeemer.

I render thanks, therefore, to Thee, most gracious Lord Jesus Christ, Who art both the Judge and the Restorer of the fallen and the distressed, for having given timely help to Thy straying sheep Peter, and for having thus kept him from giving way to excessive grief and despair of forgiveness, and from doubting of Thy Resurrection because he did not find Thy sacred Body in the Tomb.

As a loving and discreet Physician of afflicted souls, Thou didst send Thy holy angel to comfort Peter, and to give him hope of pardon: and so it was that Thy Angel, speaking kindly to the women, bade them take the news to Peter. “Go quickly,” he said to them, “and tell His disciples and Peter that Jesus is risen.”

O good, O holy Angel, how well and how fitly didst thou specially call Peter by his accustomed name, the name first given him by the Lord on calling him to be an Apostle; so doing doubtless that he might not despair because of his thrice-repeated denial of his dear Lord and Master! On hearing himself so named by the Angel, and finding himself greeted as a friend by the holy women, Peter took courage, and with confidence renewed, and his trouble and sorrow forgotten, ran quickly with John to the place of burial. On seeing that all things had been so done by the Lord even as had been reported by the women and the holy Angel—who did not lie, but as a true witness and faithful messenger had pronounced the accomplishment of the Resurrection—his spirit at once revived within him, and a sure hope of everlasting salvation sprang up again in him.

Wondering, therefore, greatly in himself, and rejoicing in the Lord, Peter longed much to see his Lord, and wished that He would show Himself to him also, even as He had appeared first to Mary Magdalene. “Let her be the first among the women, but may I be the second or the third among the

men, or even the last among the Apostles and His disciples! Nay, let Him do what seemeth Him right; be it unto me according to His good pleasure, so only that it be for the Salvation of my soul! I long for a sight of my Lord; I long to be comforted by His Own words, and to be perfectly reconciled to Him. Let Thy mercies come unto me, O Lord, that I may live, and may never more trust in my own strength! Remember, I pray Thee, all Thy former loving-kindness and that holy prayer of Thine which Thou didst pray to the Father for me, and that prayer which Thou didst pray upon the Cross for sinners. Come, O good Jesus; tarry not: Thou art my only hope, to Thee alone do I look for the salvation of my soul! Show Thyself to me: if I can but see Thee I shall be safe, and shall rejoice and be glad on this holy Easter Day!”

It was done as he had said; for Jesus granted the devout prayer of His beloved Apostle Peter. Jesus in His love was presently by the side of Peter who had sought Him, and had run quickly after Him. He took the weeping penitent back into His favour, graciously blotting out the sin against his Lord into which he had been led by fear on that sad night; and bidding him be more prudent, He kindled in Peter’s heart strength of will to confess His Holy Name, and to love Him with a never-ending love.

O inexhaustible love of Christ, worthy of praise from every creature, full of heavenly sweetness, worthy of being proclaimed by all the faithful throughout the world, to the end that no sinner should ever despair of pardon, and that no one who has been made whole should ever rashly presume on the grace given him from above!

How great was the miracle of mercy shown forth on this day by the Lord upon holy Peter! Angels glory in it, Archangels rejoice at it, the lost breathe again, the sluggish are roused, all faithful people with one mouth praise God for the exceeding mercy of the Lord, and for His forgiveness of most blessed Peter, whose faith in Christ could thereafter never be shaken.

How loving and how friendly was the discourse which Jesus at that time had with Peter after He had given him the kiss of peace; and how full of peace and joy was Peter’s heart as he beheld and talked with the risen Christ, his most loving Lord!

O beloved Saint Peter, venerated Apostle and elect patron of the Holy Roman Church, forget not, I pray thee, this day, and that great Eastertide

when thou wast reconciled to thy Lord, and wast absolved from all thy sins by the gift of the Holy Spirit.

And remember now, I pray thee, before the Throne of our gracious Jesus, me, a poor unworthy sinner, in the time of my trouble and distress; and when the hours of my weary pilgrimage on earth are numbered, and I am about to quit this body, lend me, I pray thee, thy faithful help, and bring me safe to Heaven. For the merits' sake of the Death and Passion of Christ, admit me, I pray thee, to Paradise, an entrance to which has been promised to all penitents even to the end of time. Keep me from the snares of the old enemy, deliver thy suppliant from the pains and the darkness of Hell; for God has given to thee all the Kingdoms of the world and the Keys of Heaven, that thou mayest open the gate of life to those who knock, if when the end came they were truly penitent, and turned to God in full assurance of faith. Graciously hear me, O most blessed Peter, loving shepherd of the Church, and glorious Prince of the whole world, and pray for me that I may have grace worthily to bewail my sins, and that I may obtain forgiveness from Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

CHAPTER VIII

A prayer for obtaining from God the grace of tears

TURN, O my soul, to the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, in weeping and in mourning, and pray for the remission of all thy sins, and for forgiveness of thy neglect of the opportunities of doing good which God has given thee from the first day and hour of thy life up to the present moment; for with humble prayer, contrition of heart, tears and sighs for our daily shortcomings, and with intercession for all who are troubled, tempted, or heavy laden, God is well-pleased. It is a holy and a pious duty to pray to God for oneself and for one's neighbours; for in this world there is no one without sin, no one who is not in danger. True peace and everlasting rest are to be found in Heaven alone; in our pilgrimage on earth we all have sorrow and trouble; in Hell the fire is never quenched, and its pains are never-ending. To Thee, then, O Lord my God, do I and will I pray from my heart, with my mouth, and by my work, for all the sins which I have committed, whether by doing those things which I ought not to have done, or by leaving undone those things which I ought to have done. Accept my sorrow, which I offer to Thee with full purpose and desire of amendment; I resign myself and all that I have into Thy Hands, praying only for Thy grace, and that Thou wilt forgive me all the sins which I have committed in the course of this my pilgrimage, for the merits, and through the intercession, of Thy most holy Mother Mary and of all Thy Saints, who in this vale of tears, very often shed for themselves, and of their charity for others, tears which were fruitful and profitable. Oh that it might be given to me to follow the example of those Saints, in avoiding idle talk and worldly gossip, and the taking part in foolish and silly chatter.

Jesus prayed upon a mountain, watched all night, wept often, never laughed frivolously, never spoke a light word. When He was accused before the Governor He held His peace; when He spoke He spoke modestly; when He made answer even to ungodly men He made it gently.

Mary, the mother of Jesus, also prayed very often; she wept most bitterly at the Passion of her Son; she sorrowed most grievously, and endured most meekly; when she was out of doors she was modest, and when she was at home she was not restless. In the streets she was circumspect, in the house she was not noisy. She visited her holy kinswoman Elizabeth; and having greeted that humble and pious lady, she offered gifts to her, made obeisance to her, blessed her, and bade her farewell. Having finished her errand of mercy, she returned after the birth of John with all speed to Nazareth. When Jesus was preaching the gospel to the multitudes Mary listened attentively, heard the word with joy, was quick in understanding it, kept it fixed in her mind, meditated on it frequently, uttered it sweetly, and gave thanks to God in all things worthily.

Mary Magdalene also wept bitterly in contrition for her sins, sweetly in thankfulness for benefits received, copiously as compassionating Christ's anguish, eagerly when pondering the joys of Heaven.

Holy Peter also wept, sorrowing deeply whenever, on hearing the cock crow thrice in the night, he called to mind his denial of his Master in days past. That frailty of his lips, into which he had unawares fallen, was the cause to him of a lifelong sorrow for his fault, and of a mighty sympathy with the sorrows of his brethren. O the blessedness of those tears which so speedily washed away all the stains of that offence!

Saint Paul also wept bitterly over the error of his early days, in persecuting Holy Church, and over the sins of others, and the falling away from the faith of the Judaizers and the incontinent. He longed to bring all men to the true faith and to repent of their sins: he longed to inspire them with earnestness in a holy life and conversation, and in following to the end the example of Christ.

Saint John the Apostle also wept bitterly at the Passion of Christ: he stood all the while at the foot of the Cross, comforting and supporting Mary the Mother of Jesus. He wept also over the going astray of many, and over the waxing cold of the love of others: he wept too over a certain youth led

astray by the pleasures of the table, but won back and reformed through much shedding of tears.

Our holy father Augustine also wept much over his evil-doings in the world, even as he himself humbly confesses in his writings, thus teaching all those who have turned to God that past sins, though pardoned in confession, should be sorrowfully recalled to mind, by way of stimulating humility, and in order that by this means we may with God's help be kept from again committing them, and may daily mourn, weep and pray over them. The same holy and devout father wept copiously when the hymns, psalms, and canticles were being sung in church; and the quicker he was able to turn away his thoughts from things earthly, the brighter burnt the flame of his love for things heavenly. It was his habit to mourn over the troubles of others, to rejoice with them when all was well with them, to cheer the afflicted with the honey of charity, and to succour the needy.

There are also many other examples of holy men and devout women who have won special grace from God by the shedding of holy tears.

CHAPTER IX

Of the profit and grace of holy tears

HOLY and devout tears give mastery over fleshly lusts, quench the flames of anger, purge away the vice of gluttony, mortify proud looks, curb idle talk, make retirement pleasing, and silence a delight; they make prayer fruitful. They drive away idleness, that bane of the soul; they put an end to lying, to jesting, and to idle laughter. They make us think of the hour of death, of the dreadfulness of judgement, and of the pains of Hell. They shorten purgatory; they add to merits; they break the snares of the devil; they overcome the din of the world; they lead the man who sheds them to the Kingdom of Heaven. They blot out the evil we have done; they make good our shortcomings. They teach us to shun dangers, to remain in our cells, to read our books, to write well, to pray often. They keep the penitent in a state of grace, they rejoice the holy soul with the thought of everlasting joy.

Oh that I could constantly experience this grace of tears, could cherish it more carefully; and that when it has been lost I could win it back by penitence, and could thus make it speedily my own!

He who would possess and hold fast this gift must be strict in the examination of his conscience, must heartily thank God for all His benefits, and must be profoundly humble. A hard and sorrowful task is this, but eminently fruitful to him who accomplishes it, and a source of joy to a dying man at the last. Blessed, then, are they who in this life often mourn in true contrition; for in the life to come they shall be comforted, and shall rejoice for ever with the holy Angels.

CHAPTER X

Of the tears of Jesus over Lazarus

O GRACIOUS and holy Tears of my Lord Jesus Christ, so lovingly and so copiously shed at the death and raising to life of Lazarus, out of sympathy with Mary and Martha and their friends, and with the Jews who were weeping with them, come, I pray You, to my aid when my heart is dry, and break down the stubbornness of my will: do this, I pray You, especially when in prayer and meditation I ought, in true penitence, to weep over my sins, and so get rid of all their filth, whether those stains upon my soul have been contracted openly or secretly, and are of thought, or word, or deed! By day and by night, both morning and evening, do I bewail them, O Lord, as often as I call to mind my evil-doings and all the benefits which in Thy mercy Thou hast showered upon me and upon all mankind. Amen.

Of the Tears of Jesus over Jerusalem

O sacred and loving Tears of my Lord Jesus Christ so compassionately shed from streaming eyes at the thought of the overthrow and destruction of the faithless city of Jerusalem! The dwellers therein, by reason of their unbelief, could take no profit from You, but to me and to all faithful and devout souls Ye are very pleasing and very dear.

Slow of heart, therefore, and wretched man though I be, I pray You to fall abundantly upon me, and to wash away from the face of my soul the filth with which all the many sins of my whole life have defiled it; that so, being made inwardly pure, I may be found meet to join the company of the holy Angels in Heaven, there with them to behold the Father's beauteous Face. When this sad life is over, may I, through the intercession of all the Saints, find mercy before my just Judge, our Lord Jesus Christ; and at the general resurrection of the dead may I, for the infinite merits of His Sacred Death

and Passion, be found worthy of a place among the blest, in the heavenly Jerusalem. Amen.

Of the tears of the Blessed Virgin Mary as she stood at the Cross's foot

O loving, O holy, and most sorrowful tears which, on the first Good Friday, when she beheld the most bitter Cross and Passion of Christ, the blessed and undefiled Mary, ever Virgin, shed by reason of her inward fellow-suffering with her Son, how often did ye run down over her cheeks and breast to the skirts of her clothing; how often did ye plentifully moisten the veil which covered her sacred head, and falling upon her sacred feet bedew the dust of the earth. Oh that in following our Lady's footsteps I might secretly gather with my hand into a small vessel the hot tears which fell from her sacred eyes, and might wash with them not only my feet, which I have so often soiled by giving way to evil thoughts and wrong desires, but also my hands and my head, that is my evil words and actions, and so might obtain remission of all the sins which day by day I commit.

O loving Mother of God, Mary ever Virgin, be gracious to me, and by thy bitter laments and devout prayers blot out all my sins! O dearest Mary, come in my last hour to the help of my soul; come with the host of angels and of saints to defend me from fear of the enemy and from the pains of hell! Remember the precious Blood which thy beloved Son shed, and the Death which, all innocent as He was, He suffered for me, a sinner: remember His Side pierced with the lance; remember all the tears which thou didst shed throughout thy whole life; have pity on me when I am in my last agony, and lift up my heart to thee; for in thy merits and in the prayers of the saints do I place my trust, O clement, O loving, O most sweet Virgin Mary, Mother of God! Amen.

Of the washing of the soul by the many tears of blessed Mary Magdalene and other Saints

As often as I think of the Tears of Christ, and call to mind the weeping and the mourning of the saints, I cannot help being secretly displeased with myself and feeling utterly put to shame in the sight of God: I feel that I deserve to be beaten with many stripes, and to be overwhelmed with reproaches; I stand aghast at myself, for I am full of sores and I mourn not, I am smitten and I grieve not, I am mangy and I groan not, I am filthy and I wash not, I am poisoned and I seek no antidote; I am weak and feeble, but I seek not the timely help of the Physician of my soul.

Woe is me that the words and the deeds of Jesus move me not so quickly to tears as do the foolish tales of men to laughter. I sin daily, and in almost every moment of my life I go wrong in one way or another, and leave undone what I ought to have done, and yet I wear a cheerful countenance.

Woe is me that I do not fall with Mary Magdalene at Jesus' feet, and do not weep for sorrow of heart, that so with her I may win forgiveness. O Mary, remember me now, and lovingly plead for me to Jesus so long as I live in this frail body, and in so many ways offend.

Woe is me that, whether I am in choir or in my cell, I weep not with Peter when I hear the cock crow, or the birds warning me by their song to rise at once from my bed and pray for pardon of all the sins and negligences of which I have been guilty by day and by night.

Woe is me that with blessed Paul I do not continually mourn and weep for all the evil which, whether wilfully or thoughtlessly, I have committed, for which I ought always to be sorry, to be mourning and praying; bearing patiently and lovingly the while all the trials and burdens laid upon me.

Woe is me that I neither have, nor can attain to, the purity of Saint John the Apostle; and yet do not grieve so much for my own vileness as he mourned and wept over the sins of others.

O holy John, beloved Apostle of Christ, and most faithful guardian of blessed Mary ever Virgin, humbly and with a contrite heart I beseech you to stand by my side in this my weary life on earth; and even as at the foot of the Cross thou didst support the blessed Virgin Mother in her grief and tears, so to support me in the perilous hour of death; that the cruel enemy may not get the better of me in the fight, and that I may be strong in the faith, and may put my trust not in myself but in the Passion of Christ, and in the merits and prayers of the saints. In that hour of my greatest need grant me the support of thy faithful prayers, and above all of those holy and very bitter tears, which during the Passion of Christ thou didst so plenteously shed, out of sympathy with the tears and mournful sighs of the Mother of Jesus, the wailing of Mary Magdalene, and the heartrending lamentations of thy fellow-disciples and of the holy women; for those tears of thine were not shed in God's sight to no purpose, but were in truth most profitable to me and to the whole world; nay, to this day they profit me, and teach me to weep and to mourn with thee, and daily to call to mind the Passion of my Lord Jesus Christ, to grieve for my sins, and to pray without ceasing.

O loving Jesus, would that I could gather up all Thy Tears, and the tears of Thy Mother Mary, those of blessed Mary Magdalene, that most faithful bewailer of Thy Passion, those of all the saints whether men or women, and those of all Thy faithful servants whether men or women, into one large and strong vessel; would that I could heat it with the fire of the Holy Spirit; would that I could throw into and bathe in it my soul, and by weeping and mourning earnestly, could wash away the stains of all my sins, whether of my past or of my daily life; would that I could therein, as if in the waters of Baptism, or in those of Jordan's stream, cleanse, purify and make white my soul, and be born again, be renewed, and be created afresh; that so, washed and made pure by the prayers and tears of the saints from all my sins and offences, I might be found worthy in this life present to find grace and mercy with Thee, and at my death to join Thy Saints in glory everlasting. I ask this for Thy Sake, O Lord Jesus Christ, Who with the Father, etc. Amen.

CHAPTER XI

Of the appearance of Christ, in the form of a Stranger, to the two disciples going to Emmaus

I BLESS Thee, and give thanks to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, Who art the Way, the Truth, and the Life, Who art our Saviour and our Redeemer, for Thy gracious appearance in the form of a Stranger to Thy two disciples as they journeyed; what time Thou didst take upon Thyself the semblance of an unknown wayfarer, in order that Thou mightest bring back to the heavenly Jerusalem Thy erring sheep, and by visiting them in Thy love mightest fully instruct them.

How friendly was the manner in which Thou didst join them on the road, as they were mourning over Thy Passion, and were conversing not about wars or the petty affairs of this life, but about Thy good deeds, Thy holy words, and Thy miracles. In spite of this, however, they could not but be very sad until the truth was made known to them, because as yet they doubted of Thy Resurrection, and were not convinced about the vision of angels and what had been told them by their companions.

And who could better teach them, or better put an end to their doubts, than Thou, O Jesus, their good Master, the Way, the Truth, and the Life, Who didst manifest Thyself to them, and gavest them in the breaking of bread a token by which they knew Thee well? And so it came to pass; for shortly after Thou hadst joined them, and hadst gone a little way with them, Thou didst ask them, as if Thou hadst been an unknown stranger, what was the reason of the great sadness which oppressed them, saying: “What are these discourses that you hold one with another as you walk, and are sad?”

I praise Thee, therefore, and magnify Thy Holy Name for the friendliness of Thy converse with those two disciples as they journeyed. Sad at heart and perplexed were they about Thy Passion and Thy condemnation to death: but Thou didst comfort them, and didst perfectly instruct them by proofs and warrants of Holy Scripture, in the Law and in the Prophets and in the Psalms concerning Thee.

I praise Thee, and give thanks to Thee, O most gracious Lord Jesus, for Thy handling, expounding, and making clear and plain those passages of Holy Writ which before were obscure, involved with various metaphors, and understood by few. I bless Thee, O Crown of the Saints, most Holy Lord Jesus Christ, Teacher of teachers, and Master of all Laws and Decrees, for opening in the days of old the mouths of the prophets, and for now Thyself vouchsafing to reveal the hidden things of the Scriptures to babes and to men who were unlearned, that so Thou mightest lead them to believe in Thee, in all Thy words, and in all Thy doings. How joyous must have been their countenances as they heard Thee speaking to them, with what love must their cold hearts have been inflamed as Thou didst unfold to them the meaning of the Word of God; for among lawgivers and interpreters of mysteries there was never one like Thee! How light to them didst Thou make each hour, how pleasant didst Thou make to them the whole day until eventide, when Thou wentest in with them, and they set food before Thee! How anxious were they that Thou shouldst stop with them, desiring to listen to Thee all night, and to learn more and more from Thee!

And why? Because never upon earth did man discourse so excellently as did that stranger. No prophet, no king, no Priest, no Levite, no son or disciple of the prophets, who worked miracles, or taught the hidden things of God; no saint; not even all the Angelic Choir, can compare with Thee, O Stranger, as a Teacher. "We pray Thee, therefore, O Lord, to abide with us. It is towards evening, and the day is far spent; it is too late for Thee to go farther; speak yet awhile with us; gladly would we hear more from Thee; we are not tired or drowsy; we long to do as Thou biddest us; for Thy words are sweeter than honey and the honeycomb; more precious are they than gold and silver, and nothing that man can wish for is to be compared with them."

Would that I had been there, and could have walked unseen by Jesus' side, or could have followed behind, so as carefully to have noted all the

words of my Lord Jesus Christ, to have lovingly treasured in my heart what I heard, so as to have been able to meditate often thereupon to my great profit, and to be put thereby upon my guard against idle talk with men whose company is bad for me.

But, O Lord, what actually in the body is denied me, that I beseech Thee to grant me spiritually to attain, be it in my cell, or be it in the refectory; be it when I am at leisure, or when I am at my work; whether I am alone or in the company of others; namely to have always before my eyes as being truly present with me, seeing all that I do, walking with me in the way, and inspiring me with many good thoughts, Thee, Who livest, etc. Amen.

CHAPTER XII

Of the recognition of Christ in the breaking of bread

I BLESS Thee, and give thanks to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, Bread of Life, sweet Guest of the soul, and Giver of heavenly grace, for Thy wondrous condescension in accepting as a friend the hospitality of Thy two disciples. With loving words and entreaties they prayed Thee to enter the house, with their hands they constrained Thee; without Thee they would not enter the house or sit down to meat. Thou, therefore, O loving and gentle Lord, moved by their earnest entreaties didst go in to sup with them, and to speak to them delightful words about the food for souls prepared by the angels in our heavenly home. Not as yet fully known to them, Thou didst sit at table with them, and as Thou wast wont, Thou didst take bread from the table into Thy sacred Hands, and raising Thy right Hand Thou didst bless it with Thy sacred Lips, even as Thou hadst been wont to bless it before the eyes of Thy disciples when they sat at table with Thee. Then, after having first broken off a part which Thou didst Thyself eat, Thou didst stretch forth Thy Hand and offer it to them as to friends beloved of Thee; and forthwith their eyes were opened, and they recognized Thy Divine power in the breaking of the hard bread, without the use of knife or other instrument, and in its exquisite flavour, when, renewing their gladness, Thou didst hand it to them as a token of friendship and of a wonder wrought for them. How joyous must have been that meal at which bread was eaten which had been blessed by the Lord's own Hand! How blest were the eyes which recognized the Lord in the breaking of the bread which had been blessed by the Mouth of God!

But alas how brief was the duration of that happy moment, of that blessed meal! And He vanished out of their sight. Oh the change of the Right Hand of the Most High God—here a little, there a little! In nothing upon earth is there long stay; only with the Saints in Heaven is lasting and true joy to be found.

“Whither then goest Thou, O Lord; why dost Thou so soon leave those men?”

“Marvel not: take it not amiss: I know what I have done; I know what I am about to do. Other sheep I have to visit, to comfort, and to confirm in the faith. They wait for Me, and long greatly to see Me. To them therefore I go, in order that they may see Me, and may rejoice, and may no more doubt My words. I must show to them My Wounds, in order that when they have seen those evident signs they may firmly believe in Me, may pay no further heed to the reasonings of men, and may no more gainsay My power. Nothing is impossible with Me; the very elements obey My Will.”

I praise and magnify Thee, most sweet Jesus, for all Thy doings, for all Thy blessed Words, and for Thy appearances to Thy disciples scattered in various places. Thou wouldst not leave as orphans those who were mourning and bewailing Thee. With a love which knew no bounds they ever longed to behold Thy Face, to speak with Thee, to walk with Thee, to be in the ship with Thee, to lodge with Thee, to eat and drink with Thee, to be with Thee in vigil and in prayer, in sleeping and in uprising, and in promptly obeying every command that fell from Thy Lips. When Thou wentest through the cornfields on the sabbath-days they followed Thee cheerfully barefoot, and because they were fasting and compelled by hunger, they plucked a few of the ears of corn, as the Law permitted. Good is it for me to think over and diligently to mark these things, to my own grief and shame, but to Thy praise and honour, O good Jesus, and to that of Thy disciples. When they were hot and tired by reason of a long journey Thou didst bid them, as St. Mark tells us, to take a little rest: for as the hen gathereth her chickens under her wings to keep them from the cold and the rain and the heat, and to protect them from the kite or the dog, so didst Thou gather Thy little ones, who were humble in heart, and though despised by the world were dear to Thee, saying to them: “Come ye apart into a desert place, where your eyes will not behold the vanities of the world, nor your ears be troubled by any distracting sounds, and rest ye for a while in

meditation on the things of God, and in forgetfulness of those things which perish in the using.”

And now, O most loving Jesus, Thou Who visitest the sick, and comfortest poor pilgrims shut out from the joys of Paradise, I beseech Thee to visit me in the time of my trouble and distress, whether it come to me in the form of weariness as I sit alone in my cell, or of dryness of soul as I sing in choir, or of taking too great pleasure in dainty food when I am in the refectory—when any of these temptations beset me, call me back, I pray Thee, speedily to myself by the sacred words of Thy mouth, spoken to me as it were from Heaven, and sweeter far than any earthly food.

Give me a clear understanding of difficult passages in Holy Writ; and, where the meaning of Thy Word is plain and spiritual, kindle in my heart the fire of Thy love, as Thou didst in the hearts of the two disciples, which were warmed by Thy appearance to them and by Thy discourse; so that, being refreshed on their journey by the Word of God as well as by the food of which they partook, they gave thanks and said: “Was not our heart burning within us concerning Jesus, whilst He spoke in the way, and opened to us the Scriptures?” These words are very sweet and pious, and are read and sung in choir with devout mind and joyful voice to the praise of God and His Saints by clerks and priests, by Canons and by Monks, by recluses and by nuns, of every habit and order, chiefly at Easter-tide and on the festivals of certain saints.

O all ye Saints of God, pray for me in all my shortcomings during my pilgrimage on earth; for to this day I am often vexed by evil passions warring against me both from within and from without; pray for me that, I be not overcome by the devil and his angels, and so fall short of those everlasting joys which are laid up in Heaven for Christ’s servants; the remembrance of which ought surely to rouse me to fight bravely, by means of devout prayers and holy meditations upon the Life and Passion of Christ, against the evil thoughts and inclinations of my heart. Daily ought I to reflect upon one at least of the many wounds and sorrows of my Lord Jesus Christ, Who was crucified for me. His Wounds are the medicine of my soul; His Sacred words are shields of gold for me against the fiery darts of the enemy. May God be my refuge and defence everywhere and at all times, and may the grace of the Holy Spirit be ever with me. Amen.

CHAPTER XIII

Of the appearance of Christ to the disciples in Jerusalem, when it was late, and the doors were shut

I BLESS Thee, and give thanks to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, Peace of the godly, Hope of the just, Joy of faithful people gathered together in Thy Name, Comforter of the contrite in heart, and Visitor of Monks, for Thy glorious and miraculous appearance to Thy Apostles assembled together, when it was already late. No one knocked and no one opened: the windows and doors of the house had been tightly closed as a precaution for fear of the Jews. And this no doubt happened in order that Thy entrance and appearance might be seen to be truly and certainly due to Divine power alone, and not to any human power or agency, nor to any trick artfully contrived by the devil; for Thou art very God, Who deceivest not, but dost hate and punish deceivers. Thou art Almighty, and therefore whatsoever Thou willest, that straightway comes to pass.

But the simple and the devout, such as were the Apostles and the other disciples assembled at that time in the upper room, Thou dost visit and enlighten; and so Thou didst comfort and lovingly greet them with the words, "Peace be unto you: it is I, be not afraid."

I praise and honour Thee for Thy gentle and peaceful greeting of them after their distress which had been so great, and I clap my hands at the thought of a sight which must have been more than ever joyous as following so great trouble and alarm. They did indeed need to be visited, to be comforted, supported, and greeted anew. They had been lying under tribulations and temptations greater than they had ever before passed

through; they had all fled like sheep when the shepherd of the flock was seized and put to death; and after having been scattered hither and thither they were so fearful and sad that, even now when it was late, they had only just taken heart to meet together and breathe again, as it were, once more.

I praise and magnify Thy sweet Name, O most loving Jesus, above all in heaven or on earth, for that Thou didst vouchsafe to show Thyself on this day to the terrified fugitives, to Thy unhappy and saddened Apostles, who had lost all heart, and no longer believed what Thou hadst so often told them about Thyself. But now Thou didst unspeakably gladden their hearts by friendly converse with them with Thy Own mouth: Thou didst put an end to all their doubt and fear by at once openly showing to them in Thy Hands and Feet and sacred Side evident signs of Thy Passion: in their sight Thou didst eat some broiled fish and some honey-comb; and in order that they might have the joy of eating with Thee, Thou didst hand to them with Thy own Divine Hand that which was left: during the meal Thou didst cite Holy Scripture, didst solve their doubts and didst make hidden things plain; Thou didst enlighten their understanding, didst kindle their cold affections, and didst teach and explain to them what was needful and wholesome for them. Moreover, twice didst Thou give Thy peace to them with Thy heavenly blessing, so that they rejoiced with exceeding great joy at having seen the Lord their God, just as formerly, the Wise Men on seeing the Star in the heavens had rejoiced, and had at once cast aside all fear and doubt.

And presently, so as to strengthen them against all unbelieving gainsayers, and to blot out their misdeeds, Thou didst breathe upon them the grace of the Holy Spirit, saying to them: “Receive ye (given, as the greatest of all gifts, to you who for My Name’s sake have forsaken the world)—receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained.”

How great indeed was the grace given to the Apostles by the breathing upon them of the Holy Spirit by the Mouth of Christ rising from the dead by the glory of the Father, so that not only were they themselves made safe and absolved from all their sins, but also full power was given to them of absolving others from their sins, of repelling the unworthy, and of binding the guilty! How glorious was that day, how blessed was that evening hour when Jesus came to the Apostles with such glory and such joy, filling with

heavenly gifts men who were living in retirement in obedience to Thy command!

O holy and beloved Apostle Thomas, would that thou hadst been present at this time and hadst been found with thy fellow-Apostles when Jesus came and said, "Peace be unto you"! But perhaps some need or other obliged thee to go out. Would that thou hadst come back in good time, and hadst heard and seen with the rest all that Jesus said and did! How good would it have been for thee, and for the assurance of thy faith.

But who has known Thy mind, O Lord? Or who has been Thy counsellor that Thou camest suddenly at a time when Thomas was not there, or perhaps had gone out and stayed away longer than he meant? Why, O good Jesus, didst Thou act thus; why didst Thou not wait a little for Thomas to come back? Why, O loving Jesus, didst Thou not say: "Where is Thomas; where is he who was so earnest in saying to his fellow-disciples: 'Let us also go, that we may die with Him'?" O holy God, why didst Thou not send for him to come quickly and see Thee? Had I been there, and hadst Thou permitted, how willingly would I have gone to fetch him! Did not Samuel the prophet send to call David from the sheepfolds to come and be anointed King in the presence of his brethren?

But I know of a truth, and I believe, that Thou, O Lord, Who in Thy wisdom didst create the heavens and the earth, didst permit all this for wise and good reasons. Nothing upon earth is done without cause, though many there are who understand not Thy workings. It was not by chance that Thomas was absent, when Thou camest and appearedst to the Apostles; nay, rather Thou didst act thus in Thy love, and in fulfilment of the dispensations of Thy wise providence, in order that many benefits might follow therefrom. One doubted in order that many might be confirmed in the faith. One erred, was taught better, and saw the error of his ways, in order that countless other souls might, by means of his conversion and preaching, come to a better knowledge of the truth. A man who doubts gains by asking questions, provided only that he does not persist in his doubt, and submits to the teaching of the Saints.

Many things there are which pass man's understanding, and, because of the depth of God's wisdom, men are not able to comprehend. If then a man's faith be tried let him not despair, but rather let him put his trust in the teachings of Holy Writ; for God has given to us, as a sure ground of hope

for salvation, the example of many Saints and great Doctors, who were themselves in doubt upon many points, but presently came back to a right mind, turned to Christ in full assurance of faith, and profited others not a little. Gracious is the Lord Jesus; He spurns no one, He sends no one away; and if a man draws near to Him in simplicity of heart, He Himself instructs him in the truth, and never deceives him. Things which are beyond our comprehension should be committed to Him, to Whom all things are known, from Whom nothing is hid, Who orders those things which pass man's understanding both wisely and well. Let not then the unwise man be disturbed by the dealings of Jesus with His disciples, let him not find fault with that holy Apostle who was slow in believing; for what happened to him by the Will of God might well have happened to any other man.

I beseech Thee, then, O most gentle Christ Jesus, Visitor of Monks, Supporter of the faint-hearted, Instructor of young and old, that Thou wouldst visit me whether I am sitting alone, or am studying or writing in my cell, or am taking part with my brethren in choir in singing and praying. Open to me the gate of eternal life, enlighten the darkness of my mind, put to flight the evil spirits who tempt me, drive away the many different fancies that crowd in upon me; when the doors of my bodily eyes are shut, come secretly into me; fill my heart with the peace and joy of Thy presence; and for the remission of my sins, make spiritually manifest to me those most sacred Wounds, Which Thou didst endure for me upon the Cross; by Which, when dying and rising again out of pure love for me, Thou didst redeem me from eternal death—Who, with the Father, etc. Amen.

CHAPTER XIV

Of the appearance of Christ, on the octave of Easter, when St. Thomas the Apostle was present

I BLESS Thee, and give thanks to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, Author of life, Bestower of pardon, Fountain of grace, Promiser of glory to be enjoyed with the holy angels in everlasting bliss. I thank Thee, O Lord, for Thy gracious second appearance to all Thy Apostles when Thomas Thy Apostle, who till then had doubted, was present. This Thou didst bring about in order that Thou mightest confirm him in the true and perfect faith, by allowing him to see and handle Thy glorious Body, adorned as It was with the sacred prints of Thy five Wounds, memorials of Thy most holy Passion for the Salvation of mankind.

I praise and glorify Thee for Thy joyful greeting, for showing Thyself openly to Thy Apostles, and for that heavenly benediction wherewith Thou didst bless Thy Apostles with Thy own sacred Lips, saying to them with cheerful countenance: “Peace be unto you, both now and in time to come: now indeed by faith and grace, but hereafter face to face, and by open vision: as the Father hath loved Me, even so love I you: abide ye in My love, and continue with Me; so will I abide with you, both now and for ever.”

I praise and glorify Thee, O Jesus Christ, adorable Master and Lord, for Thy friendly greeting of peace, and for Thy adorable condescension in standing in the midst of Thy disciples to keep them from fear of the Jews. For, as a good shepherd stands in the midst of his sheep to defend them from the fangs of wolves, so didst Thou deal with Thy Apostles in their evil

day, protecting them for the Kingdom of Heaven's sake against those things which were against them: and as a mighty king and noble prince stands armour-clad in the midst of his people, grasping spear and shield to withstand the darts of the enemy, while he encourages his soldiers to fight bravely, and either conquer or die happily, even so, O most brave Jesus, didst Thou stand in the midst of Thy disciples, clad in a robe of gladness and with the breastplate of immortality, as a warrior against evil spirits and perverse men, having on Thee, as proof of Thy identity, the marks of Thy Passion, gaping Wounds in the shield of Thy Body, with which Thou didst vanquish the princes of this world and the rulers of outer darkness; that so Thou mightest confirm in faith, hope, and charity Thy soldiers the Apostles, who on seeing Thy Passion, Thy Death on the Cross, and Thy Burial in the tightly-sealed tomb, had grievously lost heart. And who indeed who had witnessed all those evident signs of death in Thee could ever have thought that Thou wouldst rise again to life?

It was in order that Thy beloved disciples, who were not yet fully confirmed in the faith, might not despair, that Thou didst show Thyself to them in visible form, with the Wounds of Thy sacred and glorious Body miraculously preserved on Thee in proof of the reality of Thy Resurrection; and it was in order that they might believe, and might no longer doubt of Thy actual appearance to them, that Thou saidst to them: "Handle Me, and see that I am that very Jesus Christ Who for your sake hung upon the Cross, and by the Power of God rose again the third day, as I so often plainly foretold you, though you did not then clearly understand Me. Behold then now My Hands and My Feet, and My Side, and above all mark well in Me the five Wounds of My Passion: meditate on them day and night, and think how great was the love I bore you, and how great were the sufferings I endured in order that you might have eternal life. Peace be to you, My friends, to you who despise the world, to you for whom, after you shall have overcome the many dangers of this life present, I have prepared everlasting joy in Heaven with the holy Angels. Fear not, be not of little faith: I am your Reward, I am your Crown, I am your abundant Blessing!" Amen.

A Prayer for the obtaining of that peace of heart which Christ gave to His disciples

O Lord Jesus Christ, Fountain of sweetness, King of Heaven and earth, true Peace of hearts, and Comforter of those who mourn, say, I beseech Thee, to my soul, which is troubled and distressed as Thou best knowest: “I am Thy salvation, Thy Peace, Thy Life, Thy Comfort, Thy Hope, Thy Light and Thy Rest. In Me is all thy good, thy soul’s true comfort, the only happiness that is real and that knows no end. What more wouldst Thou have?”

“Nothing, Lord; Thee alone would I have; Thee do I seek; Thee do I long for; Thee do I love from the bottom of my heart; Thee in everything, and above everything, everywhere and at all times, do I bless and praise. Thou rulest over all things that are in Heaven and on earth, in the sea and in all deep places, in the mountains and in the woods: to Thee is known every creature whether small or great, from Thine eye nothing is hid. In wisdom hast Thou made all things, and by Thy Providence are all things governed and preserved.”

Oh when wilt Thou come to me, thou peace of God that comest from that clear knowledge of my Maker which passes all reason and the understanding both of angels and of men? Oh when wilt thou so fill me, both within and without, that nothing shall be left for me to desire? O Lord God, my heart can find no rest, until it rests in Thee! My mind can have no peace until it is perfectly united to Thee in that life which knows no end. O Peace, how sweet, how precious is thy name in all the world! How full of joy and gladness is thy voice in our home which is above! O true, O supreme, O everlasting Peace with God, with angels, and with men of good will!

Give me, O Lord, I pray Thee, peace in my heart, that I may love Thee above all things; give me peace in my mouth, that I may praise Thee with true devotion; give me peace in my hand that I may do all my good works for Thy honour! When I am sad, say to me: “Peace be unto thee; it is I, be not afraid.” “Peace be unto thee”—than this what can be more pleasant to me? “It is I”—than this what possession can be more joyful? “Be not afraid”—than this what cause of rejoicing can be more secure? “Behold, I am with you”—than this what enjoyment can be more sweet from everlasting to everlasting; what surer and firmer ground can there be for believing, and for laying hold on life eternal?

Whatever, O Lord, I possess, whatever I see, whatever I long for, all is nothing without Thee. In Thee alone is all my wealth; than Thee there can be nothing better, nothing more perfect, nothing richer, nothing more blessed. In Thee, therefore, O God, my Saviour, is to be found all that I have and all that I hope for; all my safety, all my peace: nowhere else, in no created good, however lovely, however noble, however great, can I find it. I say, therefore, and I pray with holy and humble Francis: "My God, and my All! More I wish not for." And if ever I should be in distress, and be deprived of inward consolation and comfort, still would I say and pray: "My God, and my All!" I want nothing, I wish for nothing, O my God, but for Thee, Who art all in all, Who above all and before all art blessed for ever. Give me grace, O Lord, to meditate intently upon these things, and ever faithfully to fulfil them. Amen.

CHAPTER XV

Of the touching of the sacred Wounds of Christ by the hand of St. Thomas the Apostle

O LORD JESUS CHRIST, Enlightener of Thy faithful ones amidst the darkness of this world, I bless Thee, and give thanks to Thee, for the surpassing mercy shown to Thy holy Apostle Thomas by Thy special appearance to him, thus strengthening him in believing in Thy Resurrection, which passes all human understanding, and except by faith and Divine revelation is incomprehensible to fallen man. Many are the marvellous works, O Lord God, that Thou hast wrought since the foundation of the world; and even now Thou workest marvels in Heaven and on earth that they may declare the Glory of Thy Name. But although the mind of man cannot comprehend or fathom them, yet to Thee are they no hard task: they are wrought, and are ordained, chiefly for the salvation of the elect.

It was because Thy disciple, who was dear to Thee, did not persist in his opinion, and because he had no evil intent when he said he would not believe except he should see Thee and touch Thee—for this reason doubtless it was that he was found worthy to obtain so great mercy and grace as to be allowed to see Thee openly with his eyes, and reverently to touch Thee with his hand; and this so unmistakably that all his doubt was at an end, and he was able to confirm in the faith those who were faint-hearted. Being convinced then of Thy Manhood, and believing from the heart that the Godhead was hidden therein, full of devotion and faith he exclaimed: “My Lord, and my God. This I firmly believe, this I honestly profess, this I openly declare, this I boldly proclaim, this I make known and long to tell forth to all the world, in order that all men may believe in Thee and be saved,—My Lord and my God, my Creator and my Redeemer! This

is the true and established faith which leads to the Kingdom of heaven those who hold it.”

How great and how abounding is Thy sweetness, O Lord, which Thou hadst laid up for Thy saints, and for Thy chosen ones who are so dear to Thee; and how often, in this life even, dost Thou show it to them in their times of trouble and distress, giving them as it were a foretaste of it, and encouraging them, both by word and by example, to press on and to persevere. Sometimes, indeed, Thou hidest Thyself, in order that by mourning they may be led to seek Thee and long to behold Thee, and that by falling and growing cold they may come to know their own weakness, and may cease to be presumptuous and to think more highly of themselves than they ought to think. And then once more Thou showest Thyself, comfortest those who are sorrowful, enlightenest them and teachest them; that so in adversity they may not despair, nor in prosperity be puffed up, but may know themselves to be but men, mortal and sinful, needing the grace and mercy of God, and not Angels already in glory.

I praise and extol Thy gracious tenderness in that, after granting peace and pardon to Thy holy Apostle Thomas, as he knelt humbly and reverently before Thee, earnestly entreating Thy pardon, Thou didst manifest Thy love to him by showing to him Thy all-holy and glorious wound-prints, of more worth than all the treasures of the world, more precious than any jewels, more beauteous than the reddest of roses, sweeter than all spices or the sweetest-scented flowers. Those Wounds are more beauteous than all the stars which bespangle the firmament of Heaven; more than all else besides, those Wounds rejoice the souls of the Saints, inflame the hearts of the faithful, soften the hard hearts of sinners, and draw from them bitter tears; they rouse the slothful to more earnest prayers; they lead the devout to kiss them over and over again; they move men of goodwill to fervent thankfulness. The frequent remembrance and earnest contemplation of those Wounds of Christ so stirred the inmost soul of the holy and most devout Father Francis, and made his eyes so run with tears, that their all-holy prints could be plainly seen upon his own body. And to this day those five holy Wounds of Jesus, worthy of all love, stir to their inmost depths the hearts of many a devout Religious, and even of many a man and woman living in the world; the sight of those Wounds brings tears to their eyes, as

they gaze in church upon a picture of the Crucified, or hear the Passion of Christ preached, or read, or ponder thereon to the praise of God. Amen.

Of the great grace of devotion and the steadfast faith of St. Thomas the Apostle

O my God, how great was the grace of devotion which that holy Apostle Thomas received by touching Thy sacred Wounds, grace beyond that vouchsafed to many of the Saints who beheld Thee during Thy life in the flesh, and believed in Thee after Thy Resurrection.

With all the powers of my soul therefore do I bless Thee, and give thanks to Thee, my Lord and my God, Who by Thy Apostles hast taught me to believe rightly, to lead a good life, and boldly and without equivocation to confess the true faith: for Thou hast said, and Thy word is truth: "Every one that shall confess Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father." Give me, then, O Lord, I beseech Thee, grace always to speak the truth, and to confess the right faith, even as holy Thomas spoke before Thee in the presence of the other Apostles, saying: "My Lord, and My God."

What can be plainer than those words, what more true, what more perfect, what more faithful? And so it is that blessed John writes thus: "Thomas answered and said to Him (that is, to Thee, my Lord and my God), 'My Lord and my God.'" Many faithful souls have addressed Thee and called Thee by divers holy names, as their faith and their devotion moved them; and rightly and fitly was this done in accordance with Thy unspeakable Majesty, Which is far beyond the rank of, and the praise due to, any creature, and far above every name in Heaven and in earth. Some in prayer to Thee have said, "Jesus of Nazareth, have mercy on me!" Others have said, "Son of David"; others, "Good Master and Lord"; others, "Rabbi or Rabboni"; others, "Teacher and Saviour of the World." Others have addressed Thee as "Great Prophet and King of Israel"; others (as John the Baptist) have said, "Behold the Lamb of God," or, as Nathaniel, "Thou art the Son of God." Others, as Andrew, have said, "We have found the Messias"; or, as Simon Peter, and the other Apostles (by the revelation of the Heavenly Father), "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God." And in order that all the names declaring Thy Godhead, and all the words setting forth Thy holiness might be briefly, though fully and exactly, summed up in one word, and might be firmly believed, Saint Thomas (enlightened and fully instructed by God the Holy Ghost, and made strong in the faith by

Thee, O Lord, then present with him) says openly and boldly in a loud voice to Thee, our Lord, “My Lord and my God.” In these words he gathers up briefly all that can be truly said and believed regarding Thy Divine and Human Nature in praise of Thee, and for the Salvation of all Christians, who throughout the world believe in Thee.

Grant to me, O Lord my God, that I may steadfastly cling to this holy and catholic faith; that I may adorn and defend it by good works, and may never swerve from the truth. Amen.

CHAPTER XVI

A prayer concerning the five sacred Wounds of Jesus Christ

I BLESS Thee, and give thanks to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, most loving Son of God, crucified for the Salvation of the world, for all the anguish, and all the Sacred Wounds, whether great or small, which, innocent as Thou wert, Thou didst so lovingly endure, and by Thy death in true charity and perfect obedience didst lay before Thy Heavenly Father, as a free and most acceptable offering, in order that Thou mightest wash away and deliver me from my sins.

And chiefly do I now praise and glorify Thee, and will praise and glorify Thee all the days of my life, with the best thanksgiving and blessing of which my lips are capable, with all the love which my inmost heart can contain, and with gratitude which knows no bounds, for Thy supreme and tender condescension in openly showing to Thy disciples the five sacred Wounds, Which Thou hadst preserved in Thy most holy and glorified Body after Thy blessed and glorious Resurrection; in presenting them before Thy disciples' eyes for them to look upon; and in graciously and unmistakably allowing Saint Thomas the doubting Apostle to touch them, thus establishing him in the faith. It was also Thy holy Will that these things should be set forth and proclaimed as a sign of Thy never-failing love for Thy disciples, and for all Thy faithful servants throughout the world, to the intent that their hearts might be full of love for Thee, and that they might never cease to praise Thee.

Right therefore and profitable is it that I should daily meditate upon Thy supreme love for me; so that, as those five most sacred Wounds of Thine remained ever in Thy glorified Body, like fresh and ineffaceable gashes in a

shield, shining ever brighter than all the stars of heaven, so (on account of the innumerable benefits conferred by them, both in averting and removing the ills of this life, and in assuring us of eternal happiness to be enjoyed with Thee, O loving Jesus, in realms of bliss hereafter) They may remain for ever fixed in my memory, and in that of all Thy faithful people.

Praise, honour, might, glory, and victory be to Thee, O Lord, for those sacred Wounds of Thine with which Thou hast redeemed me, hast cleansed the world, hast despoiled Hell, hast opened Paradise, hast illumined Heaven, and hast made the Angels to rejoice. In order that Thou mightest draw lost mankind to Thee, mightest reconcile it to the Father, and mightest turn aside His wrath, Thou didst, on Thy Ascension into Heaven, still preserve those sacred Wound prints: in order that thereby Thou mightest obtain mercy for me, and for all who believe in Thee and repent them of their sins, Thou didst take them with Thee to the Right Hand of the Father; and Thou hast never ceased to show them to all the inhabitants of Heaven, in token of Thy victory over death.

O Thou Wonder and Gladness, Thou Hope unbounded of those who believe in Thee; O Jesus Christ, King of glory, Brightness of the Father, Honour of Thy Mother, the Virgin's Joy, Son of Mary, Flower of the field, Lily of the valley, Comfort of the afflicted, Health of the sick, Joy of the devout, Blessedness of Saints, Delight of Angels, imprint, I pray Thee, with Thy Precious Blood, upon the tablets of my heart These Thy sacred and precious Wounds, that so I may inwardly suffer with Thee, may love Thee supremely and above all else; and may rejoice to bear willingly some slight reproach at any rate for the love of Thy most sweet and holy Name—that Name Which, infinitely above every name of holy Angels and of men, is blessed for ever, world without end.

Painted in scarlet, framed in gold, keep ever before my wandering eyes the picture of Thy sacred Wounds, that I may neither see nor heed the vanities of the world, may be deaf to distracting gossip, and may not listen to those who would speak to me of other things than of Thee, O Jesus, my Lord and my God: for utterly worthless is everything that would keep me from meditating on the bliss of Heaven, and from bedewing with my tears Thy sacred Wounds.

Pierce my feet with Thy holy Nails as with sharp spurs to make me follow Thy steps along the rough path of adversity, and to keep me from

being lifted up when things go well with me, or cast down when troubles come upon me. Cripple both my feet, so that I may not be able to stray far from Thee. Into my left foot drive the nail of fear, that from fear of the pains of Hell I may abstain from fleshly lusts. Into my right foot drive the nail of holy love, that with a soul on fire with a spirit of devotion to Thy service I may by day and by night run in the way of Thy commandments—giving thanks to Thee with eager zeal in hymns and spiritual songs; or if I am busy about earthly labours for the common good, working obediently and with a heart full of love for my brethren. Soon passing and easy to bear are all earthly toil and labour, thirst and bodily pain, for Thy sake, O my God, Who in the Flesh didst suffer and wert wounded; but long, infinitely long, are the everlasting torment and that fire of Hell which never shall be quenched.

Into my hands drive, I pray Thee, two of Thy Nails, so that while time is left me, I may be fruitful in good works, may shun contemptible idleness, that great enemy of the soul, and may with loving arms embrace Thee hanging for my sake upon the Cross, covered with wounds, but still praying for Thy enemies.

Draw me therefore to Thee from the flesh to the Cross, from earth to Heaven. I long to depart, to die with Thee upon the Cross, to be washed by Thy Wounds from my sins, and to be rescued from everlasting death.

Thou art my God, and I will confess my sins unto Thee: heal me by Thy sacred Wounds, so cruelly for my sake inflicted upon Thee. Who can cleanse me from all my sins and from all my negligences, but Thou alone, O God my Redeemer, Who for me wast crucified and wounded with many wounds. Among these stand specially forth, shedding sweet perfume, shining as seals reddened with the Blood of the Lamb of God, Thy five precious Wounds, pierced with the nails and the lance. Burnt in are They with the brand of God's love, indelible and most sure proofs of my eternal redemption: full are they of grace and sweetness, displayed for me and all mankind to behold with the eye of faith, and to caress: offered are They to weeping penitents as passports into the inmost recesses of the courts of Heaven.

Enter then, enter boldly, O my soul, through the bowels of the mercy of Thy God as He hangs upon the Cross; enter into the deep clefts of His Wounds, and take refuge there from the serpent who everywhere, both

openly and secretly, is laying snares for thee. There lie still in safety, as a turtle-dove cooing in the wilderness, as a cushat lying hid in the cleft of a mighty rock; spurn all earthly joys; meditate on the sacred Wounds of Christ; and hope, relying on Them, to win those heavenly rewards which He Himself has in store for thee.

Speak now, I pray Thee, O most loving Jesus Christ, speak to my soul, those saving words which Thou spakest to holy Thomas Thy Apostle when Thou didst confirm him in the faith, and as a proof of Thy surpassing love didst pardon all his sins: “Put in hither thy finger, and behold My Hands fixed with hard nails to the wood of the Cross for love of thee; reach hither thy hand so as to touch Me with it by faith; put it into My Side laid open in pity for thee, pierced so cruelly with the soldier’s lance that thereout came there forth a plenteous stream of blood and water, for the perfect remission of all sins and the grant of mercy to all who believe. Be not faithless, but believing; give way no more to doubts, but stand firm and steadfast; be not over-curious, but simple and devout; be not sluggish and heedless, but warm-hearted and full of thankfulness to God for all His benefits to thee.”

Give me grace, O good and beloved Jesus, often to think over and to ponder these things; to believe on, and to hold fast to Thee; never to doubt Thy words and Thy unchanging truth: give me grace in every temptation and trial to have recourse at once to Thy Passion, to look to Thy sacred Wounds and Agony for my comfort, and ever to find for my soul peace and rest in Thee—Who with the Father, etc. Amen.

CHAPTER XVII

Of the Armorial bearings of Christ, the Cross, the Nails, the Spear, and the Crown of Thorns

I BLESS Thee, and give thanks to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, King of all kings; for the triumphant insignia of Thy Royalty, to wit, the Cross, the Nails, the Spear, the Crown of Thorns, the Reed, the Cord, the Pillar (to which Thou wast bound, and wast then cruelly scourged after Thou hadst been stripped naked), and for all the other instruments of torture and accessories of Thy sacred Passion. It was for us miserable sinners that Thou didst endure it, to the intent that Thou mightest thereby confound the devil and the lovers of this world with all its pomps and vanities; that Thou mightest show mercy and grant forgiveness of sins to all who truly repent and believe in Thee; and that Thou mightest win for them, after the general Resurrection of the dead (when every one must be judged, both just and unjust), the hope of eternal salvation and the glorious bliss of Heaven with Thy Holy Angels.

Then shall appear great signs in Heaven and on earth, and then shall be displayed the Wounds of Thy sacred Passion, with the Standard of the Cross, and the other achievements of Thy escutcheon; full of joy and comfort shall they be to the saved, but to the lost full of terror and dismay. Then shall all the elect rejoice exceedingly; the lowly, the innocent, the devout, the chaste, the simple, the obedient, the meek; those who have often suffered wrong for Thy Name's sake; those who in their meditations have often mourned over Thy Passion and sacred Wounds, as if they had themselves endured Them, and have thanked Thee fervently for Them all.

Then too shall greatly fear and lament for themselves the proud, the covetous, the envious, the gluttonous; those who give themselves up to fleshly lusts; those who seldom or never meditate upon Thy Passion and Thy Wounds; those who never compassionate Them, but prefer thinking about their own gain and advantage to pondering Thy benefits and Thy cruel Wounds.

From such perverse and unthankful men keep me, O Lord; and number me with the pure and innocent sheep of Thy flock, for whom, in Thy love, Thou didst vouchsafe to be crucified, to die, and to be wounded with many Wounds.

O most gentle Jesus, clothe me with the power of Thy might, invest me with the sacred badges of Thy most cruel Passion, that everywhere and at all times I may be sustained against the snares and the temptations of the evil spirit, who assails me on the right hand and on the left in a thousand different ways and manners, all of them bad and wicked. To Thy Passion then, O Lord, do I humbly fly for refuge; and heartily do I pray that of Thee I may be comforted and powerfully assisted.

O loving Jesus, our Helper and Defender in all the trials and temptations of this imperfect life, raise high, I pray Thee, before my eyes the royal standard of Thy holy Cross, the sign of eternal salvation, the Sceptre of Thy Godhead, the shield and the bow of Thy Manhood, the impregnable fortress, the most dread thunderbolt, the most sharp javelin against the roaring and the onslaught of the devil; against the din of the world and the incitements of the flesh; against vices of every kind and every evil thought; against that spirit of blasphemy and utter despair, which longs to overwhelm me, and would so often withhold me from invoking Thy most sweet Name, O Jesus, and those of Thy holy Mother Mary and of Thy Saints; that tries to blacken the story of their lives and their good report; and what is yet worse, would entice from the right faith one who is a true believer, and keep him from venerating and from loving Thy holy Cross.

May Thy Cross, O Jesus, Thou mightiest of kings, be to me salvation, peace, and life; a shield, a sword and a spear; a strong tower against the face of the enemy; an impregnable wall against the deceit of the old serpent; a light in the house; a guide in the path; a sure defence within and without, above and below, in all the many stumbling-blocks and dangers which everywhere beset me. May Thy sweet and beloved Cross be to me rest in

labour, comfort in sorrow, medicine in sickness, ointment in pain; may it be to me my protection when I am alone, my safeguard when I am with others, my light in darkness, my gladness at mid-day; and at eventide may it be to me praise and honour, power and glory. May Thy lovely and glorious Cross be to me in bitterness sweetness; in sickness health; in my agony steadfast faith; in the hour of my departure my one hope; at the day of judgement my support; from Hell my safeguard; from all its pains my warrant of discharge; into the glories of Heaven my passport with the holy Angels.

Further, in all my troubles thrust into me, I pray Thee, O patient Jesus, those holy Nails, which as Thou hangedst on the Cross were so cruelly driven into Thee. May They be to me as keepers of my heart, of my lips and of all my senses; may They be my defence against the evil spirits, of whom by day and by night I am in fear: on seeing the image of Thy Nails may those spirits flee from me as if they were sharp arrows, and let me rest in Thy peace, or pray, or earnestly meditate on the anguish caused by Them when They were in the Body of Jesus Christ, my Lord; may those spirits not dare to vex me with vile imaginations as I meditate on the sacred Wounds, so cruel and so deep, Which Thou didst endure in Thy Hands and in Thy Feet.

Thrust also, I pray Thee, into my side, whether I am waking or sleeping, that holy and sharp Spear with which after Thy death Thou wast so cruelly pierced; may it keep my heart, so that inwardly compassionating Thee, I may hang with Thee upon the Cross, and may eschew what is earthly, may shut my eyes to all unprofitable things, and may fix my thoughts wholly upon the things of God, and upon Thy sacred Wounds. So wound my heart, I pray Thee, O my God, that nothing that is impure may find a home in it.

O Jesus Christ, supreme object of love, sure Hope of believers, Strength of those who fight, the victors' Crown, Wisdom of the wise, and Light of the ignorant, show, I pray Thee, to me, who am an exile in the prison-house of the flesh, that holy and blessed Crown of Thorns Which in mockery was so cruelly forced and pressed down upon Thy sacred Head, while Thy most holy Blood was trickling down on all sides from the many Wounds which it caused. May the copious stream of Blood caused by this holy but most cruel of crowns be to me a complete washing away of all my sins; may it draw from my eyes a flood of tears; may it soften unawares the hardness of my heart. May the remembrance of this holy and blessed Crown ever present

with me, and its picture ever vividly stamped upon my mind; may the contemplation of Thy Wounds and the thought of the terrible pain which they caused Thee, drive out of my mind all evil things, and all unclean thoughts, and chase away and put an end to whatever it is that troubles me. A violent headache suppresses all bodily desires. May then pain such as Thou didst feel when the cruel Crown of Thorns was first pressed down upon Thy Head take possession of me; may it find a place in the inmost recesses of my heart; may it vibrate through my every limb, may it rack me with pain, and purge away from my soul all the filth which by a long course of foolishness I have allowed to settle there. May it break down and annihilate in me every inordinate desire; may it turn into dust everything that seems to me lovely, and into dirt everything that seems to me precious: may it turn into rottenness all that now seems flourishing; may it turn all that now seems delightful into wormwood of the bitterest, everything joyous into wailing, everything laughable and jocose into derision and contempt.

How beautiful is the world to come, and how splendid will be the crown of heavenly glory that will be given to the chaste and devout soul, which in this world often and sadly meditates upon the Crown of Thorns of Jesus, and ever keeps in mind and mourns over his cruel Wounds. I believe, O Lord, that at the hour of death such a soul will, when quitting this weary life, have great hope of forgiveness and feel sure of obtaining mercy, if it keep ever in remembrance Thy sacred Passion.

For the sake, therefore, O Lord, of each of Thy Wounds, forgive me too, I pray Thee, all my sins, whether they be of my life past or those which I daily commit, even as Thou didst forgive, solely of Thy grace and mercy, those of holy Mary Magdalene, who shed many tears at the thought of her sins, and particularly at the thought of the sacred Wounds endured by Thee at Thy Passion, on account of our sins which are, alas, so many and so grievous. Thy love and Thy mercy, O most merciful Jesus, have far outweighed all our sins whether new or old, by reason of Thy bowels of mercy and the thousand thousand stripes of the Wounds which Thou didst so patiently endure at the hands of wicked men; and all these were seen by Thy holy Mother, and by Thy dearly loved Mary Magdalene, with their own eyes, and were by them bedewed with many tears.

Rend then, O Lord, my heart still further with the thought of Thy scourging, and of Thy tight binding with cords to the stony pillar, before the eyes of the crowd that mocked and derided Thee, that pitied Thee not, that had no sense of shame, but longed to tear Thee with their teeth as if they had been mad dogs worrying a harmless sheep; that piled stripes upon stripes, and added anguish to anguish, while not a murmur passed Thy lips, no, not even a cry “Alas, alas, why do ye scourge me so cruelly?”

O how great, how unspeakable was Thy patience, O Lord Jesus, in enduring such torments, such bleeding wounds; and all in order that Thou mightest pay the penalty of my sins! It was I, O Lord, who had sinned; it was in my stead that Thou wast scourged. It was I who had wrought iniquity; it was I who in so many ways and so often had offended; it was Thou Who hadst done no wrong at all, Who wast unjustly condemned by the ungodly. I often laugh about nothing, and Thou by base men art made a laughing-stock. I like to strut in fine clothes, but Thou hangest naked between thieves. I have good food and drink; but to Thee upon the Altar of the Cross are offered bitter gall and vinegar. I have a soft bed to sleep upon; but Thou art buried as an outlaw in a tomb of hardest rock. Often do I pass Thy Cross without shedding a tear; but Mary Magdalene and the other holy women never ceased to weep till they saw Thee rising from the dead, and could fall low and clasp Thy sacred Feet.

Give me grace, O loving Jesus, to meditate on these things, and with holy Mary Magdalene, who loved Thee so well, and with Thy other disciples so to weep, that at the last day, when the trumpet shall sound, I may be found worthy to rise in glory, and to find a place with Thine elect in the Kingdom of everlasting bliss. Amen.

May Thy most glorious escutcheon, O Lord Jesus Christ, be my sure defence, both within and without, against all the darts of the enemy, and against all the flatteries and frowns of this deceitful world.

CHAPTER XVIII

Of the appearance of Christ to the seven disciples as they were fishing in the Sea of Tiberias

I BLESS Thee, and give thanks to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, Maker of all things, and Ruler of Heaven and earth, of Angels and of men, of high and low, of rich and poor, of landmen and of seafarers, for openly showing Thyself to Thy seven disciples who were toiling in fishing on the Sea of Tiberias. They were so employed in order that they might be able to procure the necessities of life, and might be able to give food to the poor and to strangers. Such toil is pleasing to God and to men; it is in accordance with the law of nature, and is favoured by God on account of the many advantages which come from it, and because it prevents idleness and is a profitable use of time.

I praise and honour Thee, most loving Jesus, Visitor of toilers, and timely Helper of the needy by the gift to them of good counsel, enabling them to earn a livelihood by sea and by land.

I bless Thee for Thy condescension in standing by the seashore watching the toil of Thy disciples, working as they did in loving partnership and helping one another, doing everything in due order, and drawing their fishing-nets to land quietly and without quarrelling. Peter, as I suppose, was sitting at the stern, in charge of the helm, as being captain of the boat, and the most experienced fisherman; and as he gave his orders and beckoned to them, the rest worked hard, while James and John, the two sons of Zebedee, who were skilled fishermen (having been instructed in the art by that experienced old man, their father) sat steadily and cautiously at their oars

ready to do what was needed in case of a sudden storm; and holy Thomas, that strong and trusty man, was on the alert to draw in the net, along with holy Nathaniel, well versed in the law of God, who stood with his loins girt ready to help in this holy work, and two other disciples, whose names I know not, but haply they were Simon and Jude, Thy relations and dear friends.

These men, thus wisely placed, had toiled all night, rowing and hauling the net, working hard till morning; but as yet they had taken nothing. Wherefore thinking their toil useless, they were on the point of ceasing to fish unless God's Providence should otherwise direct.

But this fruitless toil in fishing had been so ordained that when Jesus, their Master and Lord, should come to them and tell them what to do, their joy might be great. It was because Jesus had not been bodily present in the boat during the past night, as formerly He had used to be, that they had caught nothing, or almost nothing, even as He had foretold them: "Without Me ye can do nothing."

But on this occasion be not cast down, O beloved disciples; for, if God so wills it, a dull morning often ushers in a bright noon-day. Wait a little, and call upon your loving Lord Christ; and your toil of last night shall be crowned with success. And so it was when Jesus appeared, and said to them: "Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and you shall find much, although before I came to you you could catch nothing at all."

I praise and glorify Thee, O my Jesus, Whose foreknowledge is infinite, for what Thou didst so lovingly say to those poor fishermen, who as yet had no settled means, no Church revenues to depend upon; but in order that they might not be a burden to others by demanding maintenance, and might not by their idleness be a stumbling-block to the weak, were procuring in a lawful manner, by the labours of their hands, the necessities of life. Thou didst come then, O good Jesus, to the help of Thy poor followers in this their time of need, by asking them if they had anything to eat, naming in a friendly way something besides bread: "Children," Thou saidst, "have ye any meat?" They answered: "No." A brief answer was this; but it was enough for the Almighty Lord Who knew all things from all eternity, to Whom all hearts are open, and from Whom no secret is hid, Who knew both what was in the ship and what was swimming in the sea. Thou hadst pity then, O good Jesus, on their poor estate, just as formerly Thou hadst

pity upon the multitude which in the wilderness had nothing to eat; and Thou gavest, without delay, by a single word, to those Who obeyed Thee, advice and help. When, therefore, putting in good faith their hope in God and not in their own skill, they let down the net on the right side of the ship, in accordance with the command of the Lord as He stood on the seashore, without their having to use their oars, He helped them by His words more than all else besides. For lo, when Jesus helped them, their net was filled with such a multitude of fish that they could not drag it to land. So vastly do the gifts of God exceed the power of men.

On seeing this so great miracle, the disciple whom Jesus loved says to his partners, and specially to Peter, "It is the Lord." On hearing this Peter rejoiced with exceeding great joy, and his heart was on fire with such intense love that, leaving the rest in the ship, and thinking of nothing else, he leaped at once into the water, and girding up his coat, hastened to Jesus his Lord, Whom, Blessed for evermore, he loved above every other holy name.

With what reverence and confidence did he draw near and kneel in the water at Thy Feet, O Lord Jesus, adoring and worshipping Thy Face, more brilliant than the sun, ever looked upon by the holy Angels, the sight of Which was now for a brief season granted to him and to his companions for their consolation, but is utterly denied to the great ones of the earth and to the rich in this world's goods, and to those devoted to the pleasures of the table.

O loving and most sweet Jesus, turn not away Thy face from me, no matter where I may be, or in what work engaged. Come and stand by my side when I am singing, or reading, or meditating, or writing, or studying. Remember me for good; and when any trial comes suddenly upon me give me a heart full of patience: give me grace to bless Thee always with my lips, and to bear all things patiently for love of Thee and for Thy honour. Come to me at night when the bell rings for Matins, so that I may rise at once to join my brethren in chanting the psalms, and may help them, after the pattern of those Apostles who helped one another in fishing, and toiled all the night till the day dawned and Thou camest with Thy blessing; for at Thy coming and blessing their toil, their net was filled with a multitude of large fish.

Vouchsafe, I pray Thee, O Lord, in like manner to fill me, by Thy preventing and following grace, with so great a sweetness of inward devotion, that at the time of prayer many long psalms may be more delightful to me than plenty of great fish would be to a hungry man: for refreshment of the mind is a greater thing than that of the body. The spirit gives new life to, the flesh weighs down, the man; the spirit purifies and gladdens him; the flesh defiles and saddens him. The spirit submits itself to, and obeys, God; the flesh often resists and is harmful: for the soul is better than the body; the living spirit is more worthy than the flesh that must so soon decay. The world is sweet; but God, Who is the Maker and the Ruler of all things, is sweeter than all else, and more highly exalted.

Everywhere and always blessed be Thou, O Lord Jesus Christ, my God, Who alone workest great wonders in the sea and on the land; for with Thy chosen friends Thou dost not disdain to eat and to sit down to meat; Thou preparest for them a sacred and spiritual banquet in hymns and psalms which are sweeter than all earthly food and the most exquisite of wines. Amen.

CHAPTER XIX

Of the meal taken by Christ with those same disciples of His

I BLESS Thee, and give thanks to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, Comforter of those in distress, Pitier of the poor, Giver of food to the hungry, Strengtheners of toilers, for the actual meal which Thou didst take with Thy disciples, and for the abundant draught of a multitude of great fish taken by the hands and by the toil of Thy disciples, before Thy eyes, and by the power of Thy words when Thou saidst to them: “Cast the net on the right side of the ship: and you shall find.” Great indeed is God’s grace! Thou art the Maker of all things; Thou providest for the little ones and for the poor; for those who have no storehouses full of food, nor money-bags stowed away in chests. Woe to those who put their trust in their coffers, for in one night thieves may empty them and squander their contents.

I praise and glorify Thee, most glorious Jesus, for Thy friendly invitation to Thy disciples to eat with Thee after their long fast and their hard toil in fishing when Thou saidst to them: “Come and dine; for I have got ready for you, who are hungry and tired, bread and broiled fish. If any of you is cold, let him come to the fire and warm himself. If the clothes of any of you are soiled, or his boots are wet, let him wash them and dry them at the fire which has been kindled at My command. Ye know well what I did to you formerly at the Supper before My Passion when I washed your feet and dried them, and what My words to you were about showing humility and charity one towards another, even as I had before so long time preached to you by My example: and now, after My Resurrection, I appear to you in order that I may eat with you, and may admonish you to observe carefully what I have told you.

“I have no need of food, but to prove to you the verity of My glorified Body I now speak to you and eat with you. Break your fast therefore with me in love, soberly and modestly, in silence, abstaining from idle talk, as I have taught you, and ye have seen Me do, and have often heard Me bid you. Never have light words passed My lips, but always such as were pleasing to My Father, and profitable and edifying to those who heard them. Witnesses of this are the four holy Gospels published throughout the world, in which is to be found not a word that is idle, not a word that is unseemly. Be then content with the scanty food which ye see before you, which I made ready for you, my children, who said: ‘We have no meat’: there is here no roast fowl or spiced chicken—things suited to dainty feeders, not to men and women in Religion—be ye thankful to have plain food, the bread and the fish which is by God’s grace lovingly permitted you. Perchance by reason of strangers and poor folk coming to you, whom ye ought not to turn away, but should to the best of your power comfort and cherish, that which is provided may not be enough for you: therefore I say to you, be not downhearted when ye have but little, but putting your trust in Me bring some of the fish which ye have just caught in such abundance, and with so much gladness of heart.”

When Simon Peter heard this, being quick and prompt in obedience, he went up at once, and with the help of his companions drew the net to land full of great fishes, one hundred and fifty and three. And they all wondered, giving thanks to God the Father, and to Thee, His Son Jesus Christ, Whom they saw before them, and knew by the grace of the Holy Ghost. And so none of them dared ask Thee “Who art Thou Who standest here with us and speakest to us, and eatest with us?” For they all knew of a truth that Thou wert Jesus Christ, their Lord, Who had risen from the sealed tomb, alive and never more to die, and had manifested Himself to them.

I praise and thank Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, dear Friend of all the devout, sweet Visitor of the joyful soul, constant Guest of Thy brethren and of Thy friends, for the excellent meal and social feast which Thou didst prepare for Thy disciples who were tired out with their long toil in fishing, when Thou didst bid them to a meal and didst give them with Thy own Hand bread, which Thou hadst Thyself blessed, and in like manner broiled fish, hot with love, inwardly seasoned with spiritual sweetness. O how

sweet must have been the flavour of that food of which Jesus Himself was at once the Cook, the Server, and the Refectorian!

What can I say more? Pleasant indeed was that feast of which Jesus then partook with His disciples: much more excellent, however, much grander, and much pleasanter, is that sacred banquet of His precious Body and Blood, which is day by day celebrated in Church, in Which Jesus Himself is received, but is not destroyed; in Which the remembrance of His Passion, undergone for our sakes, is kept alive; in Which the mind, in itself too often dry and cold, is filled with grace by the presence of Jesus making the heart ready to shout for joy. In that sacred Feast moreover a pledge of future glory is given to the devout soul for its comfort, and for its spiritual sustenance in this its pilgrimage, till such time as Christ shall come and take it to Himself, out of all the labour and sorrow of this present life, to its everlasting rest in the company of those holy Apostles of His, in the house of His Father, where shall be neither hunger nor thirst, but joy in His Presence for evermore. Unwillingly do I quit that holy and blessed company of the saints, and that precious feast which Jesus shared with His disciples on the shore of the Lake. From my inmost soul I long and pray to be made now in this life present (by contempt of the world and by the renouncing of all those things which perish and decay) one of the least of those disciples whom Jesus loves; and I hope (not for any merits and labours of my own, but by the grace of God, and the mercy of Christ Jesus my Lord) to be found worthy to be visited by Him in His heavenly Kingdom, to be comforted by Him, to rejoice with all the Saints, and to be made blessed for ever in glory. Amen.

CHAPTER XX

Of the sweet converse of Jesus with St. Peter and St John the Apostle about loving Him

I BLESS Thee, and give thanks to Thee, O Lord Jesus, most gracious Lover of men, and most wise Teacher of babes, for Thy sweet converse with holy Peter about love for Thee, and chiefly for Thy thrice repeated question to him, and for Thy courtesy in specially mentioning the name of his father, at which he himself may well have been astonished and rejoiced greatly. When speaking with him Thou didst put to him one question only, namely, about the closeness of his love, saying to him: “Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me more than these?”

I praise and glorify Thee, O most illustrious Jesus, for Thy unspeakable gentleness and goodness in not reproaching holy Peter for the grievous sin which he had committed against Thee; and in choosing rather to rouse him to greater fervour by asking him about his love for Thee, which all the time Thou knewest full well, but didst wish to make known to his brethren who stood by. Further, Thou didst thus make plain to the whole Church throughout the world in what high esteem, even after his fall, Peter’s rank and holiness were to be held, and how unchanged was his place in Thy love. And this Thou didst lest some other fallen one, not remembering his own case, should think slightly of one, with whom Thou, O Lord, didst not disdain to converse so lovingly, and to sit down to meat.

I praise Thee, and greatly commend holy Peter Thy Apostle, my pattern next after Thee, for his straight and outspoken answer to Thy words. There was no presumption, no carelessness, in what he said; he did not put himself forward as excelling others in his love for Thee; thus teaching me and all men to be humble in our opinion of ourselves, to be cautious in our

thoughts, to answer questions discreetly, and boldly and truthfully to confess the Christian faith no matter what men may say against it. Thrice (in honour of the Holy Trinity) did he repeat his answer; and because, moved by fear, he had thrice denied his Lord, so now, believing with his whole heart, and nothing doubting, he three times says: "I love Thee, I love Thee, I love Thee." What more could he say? "Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee."

"Holy Peter, what sayest thou if men who see not thy heart believe not thy words?" "I speak to my Lord, and cry out so that all may hear me, and with heart and lips boldly profess: 'Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee. Lord, Thou hast proved me, and known me: Thou hast known my downsitting, in my denial of Thee; and Thou hast known my uprising, in my bitter tears and true penitence. Thou hast pardoned, O Lord, Thou hast pardoned, my sin against Thee. For Thy Holy Name's sake Thou hast forgiven all my sins; sweet is Thy mercy, and manifold are Thy loving-kindnesses over all Thy works from everlasting to everlasting, world without end.' "

I praise and glorify Thee, O most sweet Jesus, for Thy faithful and loving commendation of Thy lambs and of Thy sheep to the care and pastoral charge of holy Peter, Thy Apostle, who loved Thee so well, and was so dear to Thee, whom Thou didst call from the catching of fish to the cure of souls, and to the government of all the Churches; from a boat to a Bishop's throne; from the use of miserable nets to a royal priesthood; from a poverty-stricken home to the office of Roman Pontiff, an office to which Thou didst not prefer any of the Saints before him. For of Thy great mercy, and of the bounty of Thy grace alone, Thou didst make choice of him to be, in Thy Own holy stead, Thy faithful and true Vicar, with full delegation of Thy power over all churches and realms, not for the ill-treatment or injury of any young lamb or poor weak sheep committed to his care, but for the protection and comfort, for the edification and the safe-keeping of all the faithful, young and old, throughout the world.

Therefore with Thy own Mouth Thou didst carefully instruct Peter himself, and didst lay the same command upon all other Bishops, saying: "Feed my lambs, feed my sheep, both great and small, both rich and poor; for I have redeemed them with My Own Blood. Remember, Peter, what thou wast before I called thee from the ship to the dignity of an Apostle,

and to what still greater honour and dignity by my special grace and mercy thou hast now been advanced in spite of thy threefold denial. Thou hast been made chief pastor and ruler of all the Churches, not for thy own praise and honour, but in order that thou mayest ever seek my glory and that of My Heavenly Father and of the Holy Ghost, and mayest keep in peace those entrusted to thee.”

I praise Thee, O most loving Jesus, for the gracious friendliness of Thy discourse with holy Peter and holy John, who were endeared to Thee by ties of special love. By Thy own example Thou didst give to Peter (already well-instructed) strength to die upon his cross; but of John, the youth so dear to Thee, Thou didst postpone the departure, in order that he might teach and might commit to writing the deeper and more essential mysteries of Holy Church; and with provident kindness Thou didst long time preserve his life for the consolation of many of the faithful. When therefore Peter asked of Thee what John’s end would be, Thou didst briefly answer: “I mean him to tarry thus in the body, in order that he may teach the whole Church, and may devote himself to the care of My Mother, whom from My Cross I commended to him. It is My Will that he live long, and commit to writing certain very deep things concerning My Divinity, My Incarnation, My Passion, and My Resurrection, things which he has seen with his own eyes, and heard often from My lips; and I will that he do this till such time as I shall come in person to him, and shall take him rejoicing to Myself. What is this to thee, Peter? Follow thou me: follow Me in bearing thy cross for My sake; for great indeed is the honour that awaits thee, that, namely, of suffering for My sake upon the cross a death like My Own.”

When all these things had been said and quietly ordered, the bodily repast came to an end; but so need not the spiritual, which is better enjoyed by the way of devout meditation and prayer than by way of a lengthy recital.

I beseech Thee, therefore, O most loving Lord Jesus Christ, best of all Physicians of the fainting soul, that in all the changes and chances of this weary life on earth Thou wouldst guide my steps aright upon the path which will bring me in the end to the kingdom of Thy Glory in Heaven. Suffer me not to be puffed up with pride as I read or sing in Choir in the presence of my brethren, who are better men than I: as I study, or copy holy books for our convent, suffer me not to think much of myself, or to compare myself with men who are more learned than myself, or have been endowed by

Thee with keener mental gifts: suffer me not in this way to lose, here upon earth the fruit of good works, and in the world to come my eternal reward with Thee in Heaven.

Keep me also, O Lord, when the blast of temptation is strong upon me, from losing my temper and being angry with my brethren: give me grace lovingly to bear with the peculiarities and the failings of others, and to make excuses for them as I should for myself, if those failings were my own; even as Thou, Lord, by long and often bearing with them, and by gently admonishing them to strive after greater perfection, didst so excellently instruct Thy disciples.

Give me grace to follow Thee and holy Peter along the way of the Cross, by patiently bearing toil of body and sorrow of heart, even unto death.

Of Thy great mercy grant to me, an unworthy sinner, in company with holy Thomas, that outspoken and faithful Apostle, mentally to touch and handle Thy most sacred Wounds, and to meditate thereon daily at Mass, in my cell, at table, at all times and wherever I may be, by way of thanksgiving for Thy benefits, for the love of Thy Holy Name, and for the honour of Thy Holy Cross.

Grant to me also that, with holy John the Apostle, I may love Thee with a pure heart and a pure body; that I may specially venerate holy Mary thy Mother who was entrusted to his care; that I may gladly hear and read his holy Gospel; that I may keep it ever in my heart; and that I may rest, as it were, upon Thy Breast, caring nought for the things of this world, and gazing upon the secret things of Heaven, even as he did in the Apocalypse.

Be merciful to me, O Lord, and keep me, under the protection of blessed James the Apostle, from all the sins which beset me. Strengthen me in all virtuous and godly living, that I may be able to resist the snares of the devil whether they come to me by way of things pleasant, or of things disgusting; for to Thee and to Thy holy Angels they are all most hateful and displeasing. Grant me also grace to root out all pride of intellect; to curb my longings for dainty food; to be watchful over the door of my heart, of my lips, and of my other senses. Give me grace, O Son of God, to drink with the sons of Zebedee the chalice of Thy Passion, for the remission of all my sins, and with them and with all Thy Saints to sup with Thee in the Kingdom of Heaven. Amen.

CHAPTER XXI

Of the appearance of Christ to the eleven disciples on Mount Thabor in Galilee

I BLESS Thee, and give thanks to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, King of Heaven and earth, Who weighest the mountains in a balance, and holdest the earth in the hollow of Thy Hand, Who sittest above the Cherubim and the Seraphim, looking down upon the depths beneath, Who walkest above the stars of Heaven, Who observest the ends of the earth, Who knowest all things before they have their being.

I bless, I praise, I glorify Thee for that joyful, glorious, and sublime appearance of Thine on Mount Thabor to Thy eleven disciples, even as before Thy Passion Thou didst openly and distinctly promise them, saying unto them: “I will strike the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be dispersed. But after I shall be risen again, I will go before you into Galilee.”

First, then, Thou didst forewarn them of two things, painful to the friends who were dear to Thee, and sad for them to hear, namely, the striking of the Shepherd, meaning thereby what Thou wert to suffer at the hands of the Jews, and the dispersion of the flock which would follow shortly after, namely, their own misery and flight in fear of punishment and death. But lest, sinking under the burden of their troubles, they should give way to despair, Thou didst straightway go on to speak of two very gladsome and consoling joys of good things to come, assuring them that on the third day Thou wouldst rise again in glory, and wouldst comfort them by appearing to them in a certain place which was well-known to them, that is to say on Mount Thabor in Galilee, the land in which Thou hadst formerly wrought many signs and wonders in the presence of Thy disciples and of all the people.

O Galilee, hallowed soil, fatherland of Christ, wherein lies Nazareth, the flowery City; that city which sheltered, and was made illustrious by the presence of Holy Mary the Virgin, of whom came forth to us those everlasting joys of our Salvation, which are recorded in the Holy Gospels.

I praise and glorify Thee, O Jesus, for Thy great goodness in having summoned Thy disciples to this holy and private spot, shut off from the noise of the world, a place fit to be chosen for the delivery of Thy Divine commands. On that spot Thou hadst already been transfigured—the other Apostles being absent—in the presence of three chosen witnesses, Peter, James and John; and as a voice from the Father came from Heaven, Thou wast clothed and adorned with an excellent brightness; and by a revelation, of which they alone were witnesses, Thy Majesty was, before Thy Passion, made known to Thy disciples for the confirmation of their faith.

In this more public appearance, however, after Thy most glorious Resurrection, Thou didst manifest Thyself to a larger number of Thy disciples, in order thereby to confirm the faith of those who believed; to convince the doubting ones; lovingly to instruct and rejoice the hearts of all by Thy Presence, and by manifesting to them the power over everything in Heaven and on earth given Thee by the Father. When, therefore, Thou hadst with Thy own Lips declared these things to them, those who were then present with Thee adored Thee as was meet, and glorified Thy Holy Name. Prostrating themselves at Thy feet, they rejoiced in singing with the deepest devotion a new hymn to Thee, our God; for mysteries concerning the Holy Trinity so deep and wondrous were then made known to them, that no one can fully give expression to them. How glorious and entrancing was that vision; how unfathomable and Divine that revelation; how great and unspeakable was the joy that filled the hearts of the holy Apostles!

I praise and glorify Thee, O most sweet and most gentle Jesus, for having conversed so graciously with Thy disciples on the Mount; for Thy revelation to them of the true faith of the Holy Trinity; and for Thy delivery to them of the right form of words for the baptism of the faithful, in water, for the remission of sins, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen. In these words, as I believe, was I myself baptized by a faithful priest; and thereafter I was in the bosom of Holy Church, by faithful parents, educated and instructed in the right and Catholic faith.

For this I give thanks to Thee, O Christ; for it is from Thee that every good gift comes, and the hope of life eternal—to which hope, O Lord, when the hour of my departure shall come, mayest Thou vouchsafe to bring me, assisting me by the merits of the saints, and delivering me from the most grievous pains of purgatory. It is for me to pray; it is for Thee to help. I am weak and unstable, Thou art full of loving-kindness and mercy; Thou canst deliver me from distress of every kind; Thou canst bring me to the Mount of Thy Glory. O Jesus, saving health of my countenance, and my God, to Thee do I cry; for Thee do I long; to Thee do I pray by day and by night, till such time as, by the help of Thy grace alone, I shall be brought in safety to Thee, Who with the Father and the Holy Ghost livest, etc. Amen.

PART II

OF THE ASCENSION, OF PENTECOST,
AND OF CERTAIN OTHER MATTERS

CHAPTER I

Of the Ascension of the Lord, and of His last appearance

I BLESS Thee, and give Thee thanks, O Lord Jesus Christ, King of Glory, Maker of Heaven and earth, Lord of Angels, and Saviour of men, Who abhorrest the proud, and comfortest the humble: I bless Thee and give thanks to Thee for having on this day—in the sight of Thy disciples, with joyful countenance, and with Thy glorious Body clad with light as with a garment, amid the songs of angels, with the voice of the trumpet and with a merry noise, by the power of Thy own might—ascended in triumph far above the heavens in all their vastness, above the starry firmament, above the Cherubim and the Seraphim, above the glory of the Angels, and the most exalted of created things. I bless and thank Thee for that, after having overcome the prince of this world, Thou didst open the way of life and glory to the friends, whom Thou hadst chosen and united to Thee, whom Thou hadst called out of the world, and to whom Thou hadst given strength to follow Thee along the rough way of the Cross.

O Lord, my God, how excellent is Thy Name in all the world! O King of Heaven, how glorious was Thy return to the Kingdom of Thy Father! With what great honour and glory wast Thou crowned above all Thy Saints, and how worthy wast Thou of being made to sit at the Right Hand of Thy Father, because Thou didst deliver Thy Soul to death, and didst vouchsafe to die for the ungodly, in order that Thou mightest give life to Thy people, and mightest make them sit down with Thee at Thy table in Thy Kingdom—prepared for them before the foundation of the world, not because of their own merits or virtues, but for Thy mercies' sake alone, and of Thy unbounded love and pity. How surpassing is the dignity of man's estate, in

that our nature, taken into the Person of God, should be placed above every creature in Heaven and on earth. Right and meet therefore is it, that at Thy Name, O most sweet Jesus, all creatures, whether in Heaven, or on earth, or in Hell, should in thanksgiving and bounden duty of praise fall down and bow the knee; should adore Thy glorious Presence; should kiss the footstool of Thy Feet; and should praise and magnify Thy glorious and Holy Name above all things, world without end.

I praise and magnify Thee for Thy gracious visitation of, and last appearance to, Thy disciples as they were sitting assembled together in the Room of the Last Supper, conversing devoutly about Thee, and wishing above everything to see Thee again. Glad indeed were they when, during the meal, Thou didst come to them for their special comfort. Whenever they came together for meals or friendly intercourse the first thing they did was to speak together about God, and the Kingdom of God, about peace and charity, about godly living and the salvation of souls. The care and thought they gave to the meat and drink to be set before them was less and only secondary. Having all things in common, they had no craving for special or dainty dishes. The community life of holy men is ample and sufficient; but those who wish to have things specially for themselves are seldom inwardly content, and lose the good that comes of having things in common.

Especially do I praise Thee, most exalted and everlasting King, for so lovingly sharing the life of those poor Apostles of Thine instead of choosing for thy companions kings and chief priests, and men rich in this world's goods. To such as these Thou and Thy disciples, whom Thou hadst chosen out of the world, and hadst kept from associating with evil men, were objects of hate.

Thanks then be to Thee for having before Thy Ascension into Heaven visited and encouraged Thy poor and faint-hearted disciples, who were being left to battle with the waves of this troublesome world. Thou didst reveal to them many heavenly secrets concerning things past and future, in order that, having been comforted by Thy words, they might not give way under the stress of the afflictions which they would have to endure for Thy Name's sake.

I praise and glorify Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, Teacher more excellent than all Doctors of Divinity, for every word which, whether in plain or obscure language, Thou didst speak to Thy disciples and to the multitudes;

for Thy many most beautiful and deep parables; for thy simple teaching suited always to the capacity of thy hearers; for Thy true interpretation and clear exposition of the Divine utterances in the books of Moses and of the Prophets, who bore true witness to Thee, concerning all those holy works and glorious miracles which Thou didst work while dwelling amongst men, and didst command to be afterwards proclaimed throughout the world.

I praise, and with all the powers of my soul I bless Thee, O most loving Christ Jesus, eternal Shepherd, for Thy tender care of Thy poor and humble flock, surrounded as it was by wicked men, which on this day Thou didst visit and fill with joy and gladness in that Upper Room. After instructing them, and upbraiding them with the stubbornness of their unbelief, Thou didst lead them forth outside the walls of Jerusalem to the Mount of Olives, in order that they might behold with their own eyes Thy Ascension in all Thy Majesty into the glory of Thy Father in Heaven—fit consummation of Thy long pilgrimage upon earth, and of Thy work of righteousness and perfect obedience, now fully complete. There, then, in the presence also of Thy most holy Mother, of Mary Magdalene, and of the other women and disciples who were so dear to Thee, Thou didst once more, in the abundance of Thy love, speak to them profitable words concerning the Kingdom of God, contempt of the world, expectation of grace to be given them, and the coming to them of the Holy Ghost not many days after; restraining the while the over-curious questioning of some of them about the end of the world, a matter which was none of theirs.

Having spoken thus, having blessed them with Thy sacred Hands, and having bidden them farewell, Thou wast taken up, by the Power of God, in Thy glorified Body, to the Heaven of Heavens, at whose threshold an innumerable company of saints and angels and of all the inhabitants of heaven (patriarchs and prophets and holy men of old, whom Thou hadst mightily delivered from the power of Hell and made to dwell for ever in a Paradise of delight) came forth to meet Thee, singing and rejoicing together with pipes and harps. Amid all these glorious and rejoicing crowds of holy ones Thou didst mount, joyfully, openly, mightily, and sublimely, to that kingly and highly exalted Throne in the Heavens, which from all eternity had of right been set apart for Thee alone.

I praise Thee, and from the bottom of my heart I thank Thee, Thou only begotten Son of God, for that heavenly and enduring blessing with which

Thou didst bless Thy most holy Mother and all Thy holy Apostles and other disciples gathered together on the summit of the Mount of Olives. There didst Thou stand, and there, as it is reported, hast Thou left, for a memorial of Thy Name, holy footprints of Thy Feet impressed upon the soil.

Wherefore now upon my bended knees I adore, I praise, and I humbly worship Thee, my Lord, King of Glory, kissing the Holy Rood, and making the sign of the cross upon the earth or on the floor, in remembrance of Thy love, and for the comfort of my heart in this my exile here below. I rejoice with Thee, O my God, in all, and for all Thy Saints on account of the surpassing joy of this day's festival; for never before was the like seen or heard of in heaven or upon earth—man's nature raised to the Right Hand of the Father, in Majesty everlasting.

CHAPTER II

Of the appearance of Angels in white garments

I BLESS and praise Thee, O most sweet I Jesus Christ, and on this holy day devoutly do I thank Thee for having (after Thy departure from the Apostles and Thy entrance with the Angels into Heaven) sent two Angels clad in white, messengers of the Court of Heaven, to comfort Thy bereaved ones who were looking up after Thee into Heaven, but were unable to follow Thee. “Ye men of Galilee,” they said to them, “Ye men of Galilee, why stand you looking up to Heaven? Why marvel you at this astounding miracle, the like of which was never seen? With God all things are possible; God, made Man, has gone up with a shout, even as in the psalm it was foretold of Him. Be it yours therefore to carry the tidings, and to bear witness, to others, of the things which you have heard and seen, even as it was commanded you. This Jesus Who is taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come as you have seen Him going into Heaven. But He Who till now, in order that He might lead to the realms above those who humbly followed Him upon earth, here showed Himself to you as One meek and lowly, will then come in great power and glory to judge the living and the dead.”

O my Jesus, Whom I love above all things, remember, I beseech Thee, in Thy glory, me, poor sinner that I am. Remember and have mercy on me, left a stranger and an exile in this vale of tears, mourning and weeping amid the many temptations and troubles of this present life, which so often keep back my heart from thinking of the joys of Heaven. Draw me, then, after Thee, O most blessed Jesus, so that, unable as I am to follow Thee with my bodily feet, I may at least go after Thee in spirit, by the path of holy desire and

burning love. All unworthy, all unable, as I am, to behold Thee in the unfathomableness of Thy Divine Majesty, give me grace to follow the example of humility which in Thy Human Nature Thou didst set me.

O blessed sight, to behold God face to face, as He is in Himself, as He is even now perfectly seen in Heaven by the Angels and all the Saints. And now I know of a truth that never can all my desires be satisfied or set at rest by any earthly good. That can only be when I am united to Thee, my God, in Heaven, and am purged from all that is evil. But for this it was that Thou didst go before me to the Father, to prepare the way and a place where I may dwell with Thee; and to obtain for me, by the scars of Thy Wounds, the pardon of my sins, that so I may have great confidence before Thee, both in this life and in that which is to come, by reason of the abundance of Thy mercies, the all-sufficiency of Thy merits, and the assistance of the prayers of all the Saints and Angels.

Ah, good Jesus, forsake me not! Thou Who in the power of Thy might hast wrought great marvels, Thou art my love, and that which my soul longs for; Thou art my Saviour and Redeemer, my hope from my youth up, my expectation, and that in which I place all my trust even unto old age. Thanking Thee from the bottom of my heart for all Thy benefits, I will, with all Thy Saints, love Thee and praise Thee above all things, all the days of my pilgrimage and of my exile here on earth.

And now, O my soul, go back with Mary, the Mother of Jesus, and with His Apostles, from the Mount of Olives to the City of Jerusalem, there to seek peace of heart and rest from all the cares of the world. Go up with them to that large Upper Room, where the Passover of the old Law was superseded by the institution of the adorable Sacrament of the Body of Christ, there ordained and given to the Apostles. Recollect thyself therefore; remain quietly alone and in silence; wait upon God in prayers and devout meditation, and so prepare thyself, against the approaching feast of Pentecost, for receiving, as did the Apostles, with a fervent heart the Holy Spirit of God. They took no thought of earthly comfort, but awaited, in the privacy of that Upper Room, the new pledge of love to be sent by Christ from Heaven. Call to mind meanwhile the good gifts of God from the beginning of the world until now, and chiefly occupy thyself in conferring with the Blessed Virgin Mary about the Incarnation of Christ: think over all the sayings and doings of Jesus her Son, as recorded in the Gospels, from

the day of His Birth to the day of His Glorious Ascension to the Father; and remember that even then He did not abandon His Mother who was so dear to Him, but specially left her to be the comforter of the faint-hearted, and to confirm in the faith the Apostles and the rest of the faithful; for she it was who knew more fully and more exactly than anyone else the works and the miracles which Jesus had wrought upon earth.

CHAPTER III

Of the sending of the Holy Ghost upon the disciples of Christ at the Feast of Pentecost

I BLESS Thee, and give thanks to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, kind Comforter of the sorrowful, most sweet Visitor of the sick, most powerful Helper of those in trouble, for Thy true and faithful promise of Divine gifts to be sent down from Thy Home in Heaven, and from the Father of Lights. I thank Thee for Thy inestimable bounty, and for the wondrous outpouring of the multiform grace of the Holy Spirit upon Thy disciples gathered together in Jerusalem. They were assembled in the Upper Room, praying and waiting anxiously for the consolation of the Holy Ghost from Heaven: they were not thinking about the things of this life; but, like devout monks dwelling apart from the tumult of the world, in quietude and silence, they had cast all earthly cares out of their minds, and with their hearts fixed upon those joys which last for ever, they were preparing themselves by fervent prayer for receiving yet fuller gifts of grace.

I praise and glorify Thee, O most glorious Jesus Christ, King of the Holy Angels, for the right joyous festival of this day, and for the benediction and hallowing year by year by the Priest (in the power of the Holy Ghost) of the sacred Font, in which those who are baptized in the Name of the Holy Trinity are cleansed from all their sins, become partakers of everlasting life, and by the grace of the Holy Spirit are made meet to be accounted heirs of the Kingdom of Heaven, and fellow-citizens of the Angels.

I praise and glorify Thee for having adorned this most holy day with many miracles and signs and gifts, and for having commanded it to be for ever observed by the faithful with joyous devotion. It was on this day that in old time the Law was given by Moses upon Mount Sinai to Thy people

Israel, when they had been delivered from the heavy yoke of bondage, and had come forth from the land of Egypt to sacrifice to Thee in the Wilderness, where Thou gavest them for food sweet manna from Heaven. And it was for the perpetual remembrance of this deliverance that Thou didst command a special sacrifice of thanksgiving to be year by year offered to Thee of the newly gathered fruits of the harvest.

But now, under the New Covenant, after Thou hadst with great power ascended into Heaven far above all Angels, Thou didst with yet fuller grace and bounty distinguish, bless, and consecrate this holy day; and in place of sweet manna Thou didst send, by a visible sign from Heaven, the Holy Ghost upon Thy Apostles—with a loud noise, fiery tongues appearing upon each of them—in order that inwardly they might be inflamed with love, and outwardly might be ready and eloquent of speech, so as boldly to proclaim, as the Holy Spirit inspired them and gave them utterance, all the mighty works which in the land of the Jews Thou hadst wrought for our Salvation. Very many indeed were they, and such as to men were impossible; but to God all things are possible and easy. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by the famous Prophet Isaias, saying: “The law shall come forth from Sion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.” Never before had such marvels been heard of as those of this day, when all at once so many faithful men and women received the Holy Ghost by a visible sign, that is, by tongues of fire; prophesied so that all could understand; interpreted Holy Scripture, and spoke the languages of all nations; when men unversed in books or letters were, in the school of God, at once and perfectly instructed by the Holy Ghost, and besides receiving so much knowledge, were also made illustrious by working many miracles and prodigies.

How wondrous and beyond description is the power of the Holy Spirit! He makes all whom He visits, and into whom He enters, zealous and learned, humble and devout, joyous and strong. Learning comes at once where the Holy Spirit is the inward Teacher, revealing the secret things of God even to babes, as seems to Him expedient for their salvation and for the good of others. Especially does He teach His own disciples and secret friends to despise the world, not to set their minds on high things, but ever to condescend to things that are lowly; to think meanly of themselves; to avoid distractions; to take count of their faults and to bewail them; to amend speedily, and humbly and unreservedly to confess, whatever is on their

conscience and disturbs them, as being contrary to the working of the Holy Ghost, and so needing confession, no matter how small or trivial a thing men may think it to be.

CHAPTER IV

A Prayer of thanksgiving to Christ for His Incarnation, Passion, Resurrection, Ascension, and Mission of the Holy Ghost with a fuller bestowal of gifts

O MOST sweet Lord Jesus Christ, Who desirest my everlasting Salvation, I, a man poor and weak, and undeserving of any comfort or any good thing, would bless Thee; and, together with Thy Saints and Thy Elect, would glorify for ever Thy most Holy Name.

Chiefly do I thank Thee for having, of Thy great love and pity, willed to become man for me, to take my nature upon Thee, outside the course of nature to be conceived by the Holy Ghost, and to be miraculously born of Mary, a pure Virgin; to be suckled and nourished; to be circumcised; and to be presented in the Temple, in order that Thou mightest cleanse me from every impurity of mind and body, and mightest teach me to live soberly, righteously and chastely all my days.

Still more, and every day and hour of my life, do I thank Thee for Thy most holy and most bitter Passion; for it was for me that Thou didst vouchsafe to suffer, to be crucified, to die and to be buried, in order that by Thy sinless Death Thou mightest deliver me from everlasting death, and mightest by Thy example strengthen me to be patient under adversity.

Further, with a heart full of joy, do I thank Thee for having, for my consolation, risen on the third day from the Tomb, and given great joy to Thy disciples by appearing to them in the Upper Room when the doors were shut; doing this that I may not despair in any tribulation of my own, or when any harm or danger befalls me, but may trust in Thee for deliverance

from my present trouble, and may have a sure hope of being at the last day raised by Thee, together with Thy elect, to everlasting life.

Yet again do I most devoutly thank Thee, rejoicing with them, not only with my lips, but from the bottom of my heart, for that august procession of Thine to Bethania, and for Thy glorious Ascension into Heaven, in the presence of Thy holy Mother, and of others Thy disciples. Thou didst go before to prepare for me a place with Thee; and to open to me by Thy Passion and Thy Cross the gate of the Kingdom of Heaven, where with the Angels Thou now livest and reignest in the everlasting glory of Thy Father, until such time as Thou shalt return at the end of the world to judge both the living and the dead. This it was which was taught us by the two holy Angels clothed in white garments (a symbol of the joy of this sacred Feast) who at that time appeared to Thy disciples, as they were looking up after Thee to heaven. Oh how blessed were the eyes which were found worthy to behold Thee in the Flesh; and how blessed were the ears which heard Thee speaking of the Kingdom of God, than which nothing can be found more delightful to hear about, nothing more blessed to enjoy!

It was for me that Thou didst ascend into the highest Heavens, above the Angels in their serried ranks, to that place where dwell those blessed ones who even now reign with Thee in Thy excellent Glory. Thou didst thither ascend, in order that all my hope might be set on things above, and might be lifted up to Thee, instead of being fixed on things earthly, and seeking its delight in them. Apart from God there is nothing which is not empty and transient, worthless and of no account. Everything which keeps me back from God, and stands in the way of devout prayer and meditation upon heavenly things, is to be spurned and put aside.

I beseech Thee, therefore, O most loving Jesus, King of everlasting glory, that in the Kingdom of Thy Father Thou wouldst remember me, the least of all Thy servants, and wouldst send to me now from Heaven the Holy Ghost the Paraclete, to be my true Comforter, and to give me renewed zeal and a larger outpouring of spiritual gifts. Amen.

CHAPTER V

Prayer concerning the gifts of the Holy Ghost against divers diseases of the soul

COME, O Holy Spirit, come with all Thy gifts, and drive far from me Satan, who with his vile imaginations so often harasses me in my prayers and devout meditations. Come, Thou most sweet South wind, blow through the garden of my heart with the hottest fire of Thy love, and root out from it every fleshly lust, that so, moistened with a shower of tears of true contrition for my sins, the spices of my thankfulness may flow forth at the sweet remembrance of all Thy mercies and favours. Come Thou, of Comforters the best, and lift me out of the abyss of black despondency by shedding upon me the glow of inward joy, and giving me the hope of everlasting rest after my present short-lived care. Help me to overcome weariness of mind by speaking to me in hymns and psalms. Give me, O God, the shield of patience as a defence against feelings of anger. As a cure for the swellings of pride inspire me with the fear of death and of Hell; for who is there that can help fearing the power of Thy wrath, and that punishment which lasts for ever? Keep me from vain-gloriousness by making me to realize my own weaknesses and the strong points of others. Make me to shun idle gossip by teaching me to keep silence. Keep me from wanton laughter by making me sad, and drawing tears from my eyes; for it is better to weep bitterly than to laugh about nothing. When my eyes are curious and wandering, bring before them the image of Jesus crucified for me. That I may not care for fine clothes make me to think of the loathsomeness of worms. As a cure for the lusts of the flesh open to my view the graves of the dead. Cure me of the love of wine by setting before me the gall and vinegar of Christ. Instead of the idle rumours of the world

make me to hear words of God. Against long stories close my ears, so that poison may not find a hole to get in at.

To keep me from going about in the shops and streets, bind my hands and my feet with the chain of the fear of Thee, that I may not fall into divers temptations. Keep me from despondency and from feeling weary of my life by the grace of Thy holy unction. Keep me from being suspicious of others by teaching me to esteem my neighbour better than myself. Give me grace to submit to wrong done to me, and to abstain from taking revenge for it, lest in Heaven I should lose the crown of glory promised to those who suffer persecution. As a remedy for the various diseases of my soul give me the healing potions of Thy virtues, and the flowers of holy Doctors. Give me grace to overcome evil habits by curbing, for the sake of everlasting life, my natural impulses. When I find my work press heavily upon me, enable me to regain my peace of mind by devout prayer. When everything seems to be going wrong with me, keep me, O Holy Spirit, Thou present help in trouble, from losing heart by giving me a sure trust in Thee, in Thy surpassing love, and in the merits of the Saints. Amen.

CHAPTER VI

A prayer concerning the cheerful praise of the Angels in Heaven, and for obtaining the grace of devotion in the Divine Office

O HOLY Spirit, the Paraclete, of all teachers the wisest, of all physicians the most perfect, with one word and in a single moment Thou canst make the ignorant wise, and canst perfectly heal all infirmities whether of body or of soul. Mercifully assist me, I beseech Thee, everywhere and always; and in my prayers, in my meditations, and when I am singing or reading, graciously pour into my heart the spirit of true devotion, so that I may be able to say my Hours, as I should wish, with devotion and attention; for without Thee all prayer must be fruitless and unworthy of being heard by God, and without Thee I can do no good thing. Whereinsoever, therefore, I fall short by reason of my infirmity, do Thou supply for me by Thy grace. Against the terrors of the night, and the temptations of the devil, grant me the gift of faith, and defend me with the sign of the Holy Cross as with an impregnable shield, that the cruel enemy, who here and everywhere lays snares for my soul, may not prevail against me. When I weary of the long night vigils, or of the Lessons, longer perhaps than usual, give me grace to remember how great are the rewards in heaven which I have now a chance of gaining. When the days of abstinence from food and drink are many, give me the power to fast, and good health to enable me to carry on my work; give me pardon for the sins which I have committed, keep me from falling into them again, relieve me from the punishment they have deserved, and give me a good hope of everlasting happiness with the elect in the Kingdom of God. When I am dull and lazy during the recital of the Divine Office,

rouse me by the words of David inspired by the Holy Ghost, sung to the music of psaltery and harp; and disclose to me the manna which underlies the dry letter of the words, and the precious spices which are stored in a casket of small account. Many secret things, rightly hidden from the lazy and the inattentive, are plainly to be seen by him who prays devoutly and meditates thoughtfully. If at Matins I am drowsy, pluck me smartly by the ear, that I may lose no time in waking to hear what the Lord would say to me in the Holy Scripture which is being read, and in the hymns and canticles which are being sung; that so my heart may be lifted up to my God in Heaven, and I may forget those things which are being done on earth.

Keep me from a sluggish habit of body, and open the ear of my heart, that so with my mind as in a trance I may be permitted by Thy all-sufficient help, to behold the secret things of Heaven, and to hear the voices of the holy Angels devoutly hymning and praising God seated upon the Throne of the Majesty on high. Oh that I were one of them in Heaven, and could join them in their song of, "Holy, Holy, Holy!" They never tire, they never cease to sing their Maker's praise; and because they are full of the Holy Ghost they are on fire with love, they glitter like snow in its whiteness, they give forth sweet scent like spices, their chant is joyful, smooth and sweet. They intone evenly; they join in heartily; they keep time; they sing with voices full of love; the joy on their countenances is pleasant to behold; they are, as it were, beside themselves in God.

Who could grow weary or fall asleep in choir, if he kept constantly in mind the blessed and exceeding joy of the Angels in Heaven? Who would not be kept wide awake by the resonance of those celestial organs, and the harmony of those numberless musicians, singing as with one voice, "Holy, Holy, Holy, for ever and ever, world without end"? And when the very doors of heaven shake upon their hinges with the ringing shout of Angels, shall worms of earth be silent? When the very stones of the heavenly temple cry aloud, and the nine celestial Orders shout to God for joy, shall monks and nuns fall asleep? Even the sun and moon serve God by giving forth their light, and will ye sleep? God forbid! "Awake, ye just," says blessed Paul, "and sin not." Be ashamed, then, of falling asleep, of being lazy; let there be no hurry, no discord, but with all reverence and devotion stand in your places and sing to the glory of God; offer with one accord the sacrifices of joyous shouts of thankfulness. The praise of joyful lips is well-

pleasing to God, provided that, for the outward part, the voices are as one, and for the inward part, the minds are pure and attentive. That which at a feast gives most pleasure, that which to a musical entertainment gives most sweetness, is harmony of voice, cheerfulness of countenance, and honesty of life.

How delightful and how sacred is that Congregation wherein the Holy Ghost is present as Master, and among the brethren are found love in the heart, truth on the lips, dutifulness in the work, and peace everywhere; no dissimulation, no fear of being deceived. Such an one is a perfect brotherhood, one which can never be disturbed by quarrels, can never be discouraged in its work, can never be overcome by misfortune, “because the charity of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Ghost”; and He is given to the humble, to the contrite, to the needy, to the gentle, to the peace-makers, and to those who, whether by day or by night, are ready for every good work and the praise of God. These are the works of the Holy Ghost, Who to this day worketh in his faithful ones many good works, “dividing to every one according as He will;” if only they prepare themselves for receiving His grace, and keep diligent watch over their hearts in every thought and act. A great and arduous task it is to keep the heart from wandering in prayer, and to fix the mind upon God in meditation. But though our spirit often plays us false, is led astray of evil, and inclines to vanity; yet the Holy Ghost comes back to us, reproves our heart, makes it contrite, wounds it, anoints it, and heals it. He Himself teaches us, and He enlightens us; He humbles us by our daily shortcomings; He raises us up again by inward consolations; He waters our heart by frequent prayer, and cleanses it by bitter groanings.

O God the Holy Ghost, the Sanctifier, the Ruler, and the Guardian of the faithful; Absolver of sinners, Restorer of innocence, and Comforter of the sorrowful; O merciful and gracious Lord Paraclete, most loving Comforter of the fainthearted, ever, I beseech Thee, turn that which is evil in me into good, and that which is good into that which is better; turn my mourning into joy; my wandering feet into the right path; my ignorance into knowledge of the truth; my lukewarmness into zeal; my fear into love; all my material good into a spiritual gift; all my earthly desires into heavenly; all that is transient into that which lasts for ever; everything human into that which is Divine; everything created and finite into that sovereign, infinite,

and immeasurable Good, Which Thou Thyself art, O my God, and my Saviour.

O my God, my true and everlasting Salvation, keep me, I pray Thee, from present wrong-doing; forgive me that which is past; and deliver me from the perils which may beset me in the time to come, by a large outpouring upon me of the grace of the Holy Spirit, which on this day Thou didst shed forth into the hearts of the Apostles, blessing them abundantly, and sending them forth to preach Thy Word among all nations. Amen.

CHAPTER VII

Of the preaching of the Apostles, and the spreading of the most Holy Name of our Lord Jesus Christ throughout the world, for the Salvation of men

I BLESS Thee, and give thanks to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ of Nazareth, most highly exalted Son of God, Blessed for ever above all the Saints, because on this day, when the Holy Spirit, Whom Thou hadst sent into the world, had come visibly in the form of fire, the hearts of the faithful were invisibly so inflamed with the love and praise of Thy Holy Name, that without delay that Holy Name, exalted by the Father far above all holy names, was fearlessly and publicly preached, praised, spread abroad, and magnified by Thy blessed Apostles; was openly proclaimed before all the people in Jerusalem, and among all nations; and went on from day to day being more and more exalted, honoured, and adored.

And then, as the number of the disciples increased, so great devotion and brotherly love was kindled among the faithful, that they were one in the belief of their minds and in the kindliness of their actions. True love for God made them all of one heart and soul; none of them sought his own things but those of Jesus Christ; and in the holy primitive Church, gathered together in the Holy Ghost, all property was held in common. So great also was the joy, peace, and concord among them that no one said that anything which he possessed was his own, but every one was glad to have all things in common for God's sake, and to distribute to those who were in need. This holy and heavenly mode of life was learnt in the first instance by the holy Apostles from our Lord Jesus Christ Himself; thereafter they were

careful to observe it; and they continued so to do throughout their lives, which they ended by dying for the Faith of Jesus Christ.

I praise and bless Thee, Holy Father, Almighty Everlasting God, together with Thy Only-begotten Son, and the Holy Ghost, the Paraclete, for all Thy benefits and spiritual gifts, which of old Thou didst bestow upon Thy chosen friends, and upon the holy Patriarchs and Prophets. Long ages since, Thou didst reveal to them through the Holy Ghost, both by words and by signs, the secret things of Thy Wisdom, and the judgements of Thy Mouth, and chiefly the mystery of Thy Incarnation. But after Thy coming, O loving Jesus, Thou didst fulfil and make plain in Thy Own Life many of the hidden things of Scripture, and didst expound others of them more fully—still, however, lovingly postponing till after the mission of the Holy Ghost those things which mere babes in Christ were not able to receive. And further—what is still more wonderful and praiseworthy—Thou didst of a sudden inflame with the fire of the Holy Ghost the untutored minds of the Apostles, and didst perfectly instruct the hearts of those whom Thou hadst drawn away from earthly vanities, and who were devoted to Thee; making them wiser than the wise of this world, and giving them strength to convert the whole world.

I praise and glorify Thee, most illustrious Jesus Christ, Enlightener and Restorer of the entire human race, for the conversion and gathering together of much people, belonging to many nations and speaking divers tongues, whom Thou hast brought out of various parts of the world into the unity of the Catholic faith and of the Apostles' Doctrine, causing them to join in praising Thy most sweet and Holy Name in hymns and psalms and spiritual songs (thus most devoutly celebrating this sacred festival of the Holy Ghost) in all places and churches, and in convents of Religious of all the different Orders. At this great festival, in the hearing of the common people, and of princes and nobles, are recited in Church the many wonderful things which were done in days of old—works which from the beginning of the world were wrought upon earth by the Holy Ghost for the salvation of those who believe, and which He will never cease to work until the day of judgement shall come: for “if God be for us, who is against us?” And so it is that in the psalm the Holy Ghost exhorts all the faithful, saying: “In the Churches bless ye God the Lord, from the fountains of Israel. There is

Benjamin, a youth, in ecstasy of mind,” beholding, that is to say, the things of Heaven, and forsaking all things that are earthly.

Blessed are those servants whose feet are swift to join in praising God; who rejoice in taking part with the Angels in blessing His Holy Name. Blessed are they who despise the things that are without, and turn with all their heart to God; that so they may receive the grace of the Holy Spirit, and may be enabled to overcome all carnal affections, and to resist their ghostly enemy; for greater and stronger for good are the power and grace of the Holy Spirit, than is the power of the wicked one for evil.

O most good and loving Jesus, I bless and praise Thee for the abundant grace and wisdom which Thou didst bestow upon Thy Apostles, thus enabling them to preach Thy Word boldly before all the dwellers in Jerusalem and Samaria, and even unto the ends of the earth; and especially do I bless and praise Thee for Thy gift of constancy and singleness of heart, which kept them steadfast in the faith in spite of persecution from city to city, and caused them to rejoice in suffering reproach for Thy Name’s sake, in being thrown into prison, in being scourged, in being tormented with hunger, in having to undergo punishment of many kinds. All these things seemed to them small and of no account in comparison with the crown of everlasting Life, and the greatness of the glory which were laid up for them, even as blessed Paul says: “The sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us.”

Which glory, O most loving Jesus, Son of the Living God, of Thy most tender mercy, by the immeasurable grace of the Holy Spirit, and through the glorious intercessions of all Thy Saints (which are so pleasing to Thee), after the sad and perilous struggles of this my present life are ended, to me do Thou vouchsafe to grant—

Who livest and reignest with the Father and the same Holy Spirit, God in Three Persons, One in Essence, Co-equal in Glory, for ever and ever, world without end. Amen.

SAINT LYDWINE OF SCHIEDAM

THOMAS A KEMPIS

E-BOOK ALSO AVAILABLE IN PAPERBACK.

NIHIL OBSTAT.
FR. INNOCENTIUS APAP, S.TH.M., O.P.
CENSOR DEPUTATUS.

IMPRIMATUR.
EDM. CAN. SURMONT,
VIC. GEN.
WESTMONASTERII,
DIE 25 MARTII, 1912.

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CONTENTS

SAINT LYDWINE OF SCHIEDAM

INTRODUCTION

LIFE OF LYDWINE, VIRGIN

PART I

PROLOGUE TO THE LIFE OF LYDWINE, VIRGIN

CHAPTER I

OF THE BIRTHPLACE AND BIRTH OF THE VIRGIN LYDWINE, AND THE PROBITY OF HER PARENTS

CHAPTER II

OF HER DEVOTION TO THE IMAGE OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN

CHAPTER III

OF HER STRONG PURPOSE IN THE STATE OF VIRGINITY

CHAPTER IV

OF THE BEGINNING OF HER WEAKNESS, AND THE OCCASION OF HER LONG ILLNESS

CHAPTER V

OF THE OPINION OF A CERTAIN DOCTOR, AND THE MIRACLE THAT BEFELL HER

CHAPTER VI

OF THE SCANTINESS OF HER NOURISHMENT FOR MANY YEARS

CHAPTER VII

OF THE VARIOUS ILLNESSES AND PAINS THAT TORMENTED HER DAY AND NIGHT

CHAPTER VIII

OF THE SEVERITY OF HER FEVER AND A FRESH DISEASE IN HER LEG

CHAPTER IX

OF THE HARDNESS OF HER BED AND THE COLD SHE SUFFERED IN WINTER

CHAPTER X

OF HER WATCHINGS AND STRUGGLE AGAINST SLEEP

CHAPTER XI
OF THE POVERTY AND ENDURANCE OF HER FATHER

CHAPTER XII
OF THE ILLUSION OF SATAN WHO CAST HER FATHER INTO A DITCH

CHAPTER XIII
OF THE DEATH OF HER FATHER ON THE VIGIL OF THE CONCEPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

CHAPTER XIV
OF THE DEATH OF JOHN PETERS HER GRANDFATHER AND HIS LONG CONTINENCE

CHAPTER XV
OF THE DEATH OF PETRONILLA HER MOTHER

CHAPTER XVI
OF HER STATE AFTER HER MOTHER'S DEATH, AND HER PITY FOR THE POOR

CHAPTER XVII
OF THE BURNING OF HER BED WHICH SHE PUT OUT WITH ONE HAND WITHOUT ANY INJURY

CHAPTER XVIII
OF THE ASHES MINISTERED TO HER BY AN ANGEL AT THE BEGINNING OF LENT

CHAPTER XIX
OF THE WINE MIRACULOUSLY PLACED IN HER CUP

CHAPTER XX
OF THE MONEY PAID FOR HER BROTHER AND MULTIPLIED IN HER PURSE

CHAPTER XXI
OF THE HAM GIVEN TO THE POOR, AND MIRACULOUSLY REPLACED BY ANOTHER

CHAPTER XXII
OF THE MEAT AND PEAS GIVEN TO THE POOR, AND MULTIPLIED

CHAPTER XXIII
OF THE VISION OF A HEAVENLY TABLE FILLED BY THE ALMS OF THE POOR

PART II
PROLOGUE TO THE SECOND PART OF THE LIFE OF THE SAME VIRGIN

CHAPTER I
OF THE BEGINNING OF HER SPIRITUAL CONSOLATIONS THROUGH THE RECOLLECTION OF THE LORD'S PASSION

CHAPTER II
OF HER RAPTURE INTO THE HOLY LAND, AND TO THE SACRED PLACES OF THE CITY OF ROME

CHAPTER III
OF THE WONDERFUL BRIGHTNESS AND SWEETNESS APPEARING IN HER CELL

CHAPTER IV
OF THE VISION ON CHRISTMAS NIGHT, AND THE ABUNDANCE OF MILK IN HER BREASTS

CHAPTER V
OF THE CYPRESS ROD WHICH AN ANGEL BROUGHT HER FROM PARADISE

CHAPTER VI
OF THE BEREAVEMENT OF THE HEAVENLY BRIGHTNESS ON ACCOUNT OF ANOTHER HIDING IN HER CELL

CHAPTER VII
OF HER RAPTURE TO THE REGIONS OF PURGATORY, AND TO THE JOYS OF PARADISE, WHENCE SHE BROUGHT BACK A VEIL GIVEN HER BY THE BLESSED VIRGIN

CHAPTER VIII
OF THE GLORIOUS CROWN PREPARED FOR HER, BECAUSE OF THE INSULTS AND WOUNDS INFLICTED ON HER BY THE MEN OF PICARDY

CHAPTER IX
OF THE PATIENCE AND DEATH OF PETRONILLA, THIS VIRGIN'S NIECE

CHAPTER X
OF THE WITHDRAWAL OF DIVINE CONSOLATION, WHICH THE VIRGIN SUFFERED ON ACCOUNT OF HER GRIEF FOR HER DEAD NIECE

CHAPTER XI
OF THE DEVOUT YOUTH GERARD, WHO HAD BECOME A HERMIT, AND OF THE PILGRIMS WHO VISITED HIM

CHAPTER XII
OF THE HAPPY DEATH OF MASTER WERMBOLD, PRIEST, THIS VIRGIN'S FAITHFUL FRIEND

CHAPTER XIII
OF HER DIVERS RAPTURES AND HER KNOWLEDGE OF THE STATE OF CERTAIN RELIGIOUS

CHAPTER XIV
OF THE APPEARANCE AND KNOWLEDGE OF THE ANGELIC BRIGHTNESS ABOUT HER

CHAPTER XV
OF THE WONDERFUL MANNER OF HER INTERIOR PAIN BEFORE THE RAPTURE OF HER SPIRIT

CHAPTER XVI
OF HER SPIRIT OF PROPHECY, WHEREBY SHE REVEALED TO OTHERS MANY
HIDDEN THINGS

CHAPTER XVII
OF A CERTAIN DEPARTED SACRISTAN AND MANY OTHER DEAD

CHAPTER XVIII
OF HER CAUTION AND PRUDENCE CONCERNING THE REVELATION OF THE STATE
OF THE DEPARTED

CHAPTER XIX
OF THE TEMPTATION OF A CERTAIN MAN, DELIVERED BY THE ADVICE OF THE
VIRGIN FROM THE SNARE OF THE DEVIL

CHAPTER XX
OF A WOMAN FREED BY THE MERITS OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY FROM THE
GULF OF DESPAIR

CHAPTER XXI
OF HER GRACE OF GREAT COMPUNCTION AND ABUNDANT SHEDDING OF TEARS
IN THE COMMUNION OF THE BODY OF CHRIST

CHAPTER XXII
OF HER INSATIABLE DESIRE TO COMMUNICATE OFTEN, AND OF THE APPEARANCE
OF A CHILD CRUCIFIED

CHAPTER XXIII
OF THE FEVER OF THE CHILD BALDWIN, AND OF MASTER JOHN HER CONFESSOR

CHAPTER XXIV
OF HER SUFFERING FROM STONE AND HER FOREKNOWLEDGE BEFORE THE DAY
OF HER DEATH

CHAPTER XXV
OF THE GRACE ON EASTER NIGHT AND THE PROPHECY OF HER DEATH

CHAPTER XXVI
OF HER HAPPY DEATH AND SUFFERINGS AT THE LAST

CHAPTER XXVII
OF THE WONDERFUL PLACING OF HER ARMS, AND THE SHROUDING OF HER BODY

CHAPTER XXVIII
OF THE WONDERFUL BEAUTY AND ASPECT OF HER COUNTENANCE

CHAPTER XXIX
OF THE FLOCKING OF VISITORS TO HER DEAD BODY

CHAPTER XXX
OF THE STAINS WHICH SHE CONTRACTED FROM UNCLEAN MEN

CHAPTER XXXI
OF HER REVERENTIAL BURIAL

CHAPTER XXXII
OF THE MIRACLES AFTER HER DEATH

CHAPTER XXXIII
THE NARRATION OF THREE MIRACLES

FIRST MIRACLE

SECOND MIRACLE

THIRD MIRACLE

SAINT LYDWINE OF SCHIEDAM

INTRODUCTION

The Life of Lydwine, Virgin, is of all the works of Thomas à Kempis certainly the least original and to English readers generally the least familiar. The latter fact is most probably due to the subject matter. That the work is not original, Thomas himself is our authority, when he states in his Prologue that he has read through the “book of the life of the holy and most patient virgin Lydwine,” and has now sent it on to his brothers, the Canons Regular of Briel, composed in a style more brief and clear, with certain omissions and his own division of chapters and books. In fact, our venerable Author contented himself with merely editing the biography already published by one John Brugman. A comparison with the latter shows that almost throughout à Kempis has retained even the language of Brugman. This circumstance has rendered the task of translation somewhat ungrateful: but a full compensation has been found in the intense interest which a study of the life itself of this servant of God evoked.

The first sentiment that arises, as one reads the unvarnished and detailed account given by the ancient chroniclers of the appalling sufferings which afflicted Lydwine, may be one of very natural repulsion. But a more attentive consideration of this pathetic figure, lying motionless there in the darkened hovel, enduring the most atrocious pains, with never a murmur of complaint, never a thought of self, embalms the soul with the sweet fragrance of Christian virtue, such a fragrance as refreshed the senses of those who penetrated into her miserable cabin. The thought of the active works of charity, which this victim of expiation initiated and carried out to relieve miseries far less intense than her own, fills the mind with admiration and amazement. And a further contemplation of the marvellous, mystic delights, with which her soul was almost habitually inundated, gives rise to a sense of mingled awe and envy.

It is indeed a wonderful existence to which we are here introduced: on the one hand unexampled physical suffering, wholly unrelieved by natural

remedies, wholly unsupported by natural nourishment, and on the other supernatural visitations as unmeasured only as the pains of the poor, tortured, worn-out frame. So marvellous an existence may well excuse a certain amount of previous scepticism, and certainly it is such as to call for proportionate proof. But once that proof is forthcoming, for the scientific and unprejudiced mind there is nothing for it but to accept the facts, be the explanation what it may.

These facts are of two orders. The first regards the sufferings and abstinence of Lydwine. However weird, however varied, however intense, however long continued, and under each and all these heads, however inexplicable from a natural point of view these ailments may be, in themselves they were sensible facts, capable of being observed and tested by all, and by their very strangeness evoking a more close and detailed observation and criticism than would be given to ordinary events of daily life. The same is to be said of her continued and absolute fast. Marvellous and miraculous as is the prolongation of a human life despite such complex and malignant maladies, and despite the absence for so many years of all bodily nourishment and sleep, the only other hypothesis admissible contemplates an alternative far more incredible, viz, that the entire population of a country town—and who does not know the intensity and ingenuity and malevolence of neighbourly curiosity in such centres?—should either have been hoodwinked itself, or should have entered into a vast and meaningless conspiracy to deceive the whole kingdom, princes, medical men, skilled theologians, and strangers of every conceivable quality and degree. The second order of facts regards other favours more directly supernatural. Many of these enter into the same category as the first in so far as they fall immediately under sensible observation. Of the others, as the majority of the raptures and visions recorded, Lydwine herself is our sole authority. If these are to be rejected, it can be only on the supposition that the virgin was suffering from delusion or that she was living a lie: and how far such a theory tallies with the ascertained facts of her character and her conduct may be safely left to the unprejudiced mind to judge.

It would indeed be difficult to find a biography, of which the details, incredible as they may seem at first sight, are presented to us with more convincing authority. The Venerable à Kempis himself was a contemporary of the maiden whose saintly life he undertook to edit; he was born the same

year, 1380, and he passed away thirty-eight years after her demise. For some of his facts he quotes the authority of first or secondhand witnesses. For the rest, he has followed very closely John Gerlac and John Brugman; but that, as is sufficiently evident from the Prologue, not without considerable deliberation and discussion. Finally, the Author of the Imitation was not likely easily to lend the authority of his name to the recounting of unfounded extravagances.

John Brugman, whose Life our Author chiefly uses, thus enumerates his sources of information in his Introduction: "Let the readers of this biography know that I have received the greater portion of it from the lips of Master John Walters of Lyden: who for nearly eight years was the confessor of that virgin, and learnt these things from her: in part [I have taken it] from the writings of John Gerlac, a certain relative of hers who lived in her house many years: and in part from a letter which the Governors of the city of Schiedam delivered as a testimony of her ailments to Master John Angels of Dordrecht, of the Order of Prémontré, of Marienwaer, who was then Pastor of the town Church: and a little [I have gathered] from the lips of others worthy of faith: but the whole [has been compiled] with the correction or approbation of the aforesaid Master John, the confessor of this virgin, and of John Gerlac." The extract is certainly of interest if only as showing that hagiographers of the fifteenth century were not unaware or careless of the exigencies of historical criticism.

The John Gerlac here mentioned as a relative of the Saint and living many years in her house, was an ascetic writer of some repute and a Canon Regular of Windesheim, a fervent and humble religious, according to the testimony of his contemporaries. He wrote a biography of his holy kinswoman soon after her death in German, and John Brugman's first Life, the one later edited by à Kempis, is little more than a translation into Latin of this.

Subsequently John Brugman wrote another biography with considerably more detail and a good deal of expansion. John Brugman himself was a Friar Minor, a friend of Denys the Carthusian, and he is quoted by Wadding as one of the first preachers of his day, a man remarkable alike for eloquence and sanctity.

Both these biographies are edited and annotated by Papebroch in the Bollandists' *Acta Sanctorum*, April, Vol. II. There also is found a copy of

the Letter of the Magistrates of Schiedam, to which John Brugman refers in the extract above, and which he gives in extenso in the Prologue to his second Life. This curious document seems worthy of a place here, both on account of its own intrinsic interest and as a further witness to the critical investigation to which the actions and sufferings of our Saint were subjected. The most exacting in these days of boasted research could hardly demand more. A comparison of this Letter with Chapters VI. and VII. of Part I of à Kempis' Life will show that he, as well as Brugman before him, made free use of this authentic piece. The reader must forgive the involved phraseology for the sake of a literal translation.

“We, the Bailiff, the Mayor, the Bourgmaestres, Sheriffs and Councillors of the town of Schiedam, in the Duchy of Holland, in the Diocese of Utrecht, make known to all that we have seen and read, in the year of the Lord 1421 on the twelfth day of September, the Letter sealed with the seal of our town, containing word for word as follows:

“To the faithful of Christ, all and sundry, spiritual and lay, adults and minors, nobles and commoners, to men and persons of both sexes of whatever state, rank or condition they may be, within cities or without, on land or on sea, or wheresoever they may tarry, or have their home or place of habitation, whom the present letters may reach, the Baillif, the Mayor, the Bourgmaestres, Sheriffs and Councillors of the town of Schiedam, in the Duchy of Holland, in the Diocese of Utrecht, greeting with ever humble salutation and witness to the truth. Whereas right reason judges, justice demands and requires that true happenings and cases may be openly published, reported and manifested, yea ought justly to be published, reported and manifested; especially those wherein the praise, honour and glory of God may be present and shine forth.

Therefore we certify and we make known, and we desire the faithful of Christ aforesaid all and sundry to know, we publish, we report, and we witness in truth to these writings, concerning the facts and events most wondrous and strange, which in the abovenamed our city have happened and taken place, and still daily take place and happen in a certain virgin, named Liedwy Peters. Be this known that the said virgin and maid was grievously sick, and very greatly tormented in her bed, whereon also she lies and has lain well twenty-three years on the Feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary last passed. And within the same time she has

never taken or received save one half a pint of wine a week or thereabouts, with a little water, or a little sugar, or a very little cinnamon well ground; except that within the first three years of her ailment, occasionally and between times, she took a small piece of apple or bread, and sometimes ate or drank a little fresh milk: but within the seven years last passed she has used no food or drink at all, nor does use any at present.

“She does not sleep, nor for all the above-written seven years has she ever slept, except very little, and scarcely for the space of two nights, all reckoned together. And she lies now so pitiably and miserably, that she has lost her intestines and is deprived of the same. And grey worms, full of water of the same colour, thick as a spindle-end, about as long as the joint of a finger, eat and gnaw her flesh, without any feter or ill odour arising thence, (the which we write with the leave and reverence of all). And when in times past she was wont to be moved or handled, then it was necessary to bind her body well above about the shoulders with bandages, or with a towel, or with some such thing : otherwise the whole body would have fallen into small portions and would have utterly dropped to pieces. But now in later times she cannot in any way be moved, nor could she be within the seven years last passed, during which she has lain and still lies on her back, and cannot move save her head and one arm.”

“And sometimes at intervals from her mouth, nose, ears and other passages she sends forth much blood, notwithstanding that she takes no food or drink, nor has taken save as above described. And the same virgin and maid within the same seven years aforesaid had and still has every third day a great and grievous tertian fever, which first comes to her with an unutterable heat: and not long after this comes a terrible cold: and then again heat and cold by turn. And this lasted thus for well half a year : but after this period she has cold enduring for a time and then heat. And when she is freed from this fever, then is she quite unconscious for ten or twelve hours. And when she has and suffers the aforesaid fevers, then she vomits or sends out by the mouth at night much red water, so that a quart vessel is filled thereof in a week: and moreover in addition within the year she also vomits and throws up well two measures full of this water.

“The aforesaid virgin and maid has also in her body three openings: of which each is well as large as the inner hollow or bottom of a common cup, and they are as black as pitch, as appears to those who look in and see. And

from one of them, which is in the stomach of that virgin and maid, there run and overflow at intervals as many sometimes as two hundred together of the aforesaid worms; and upon it is placed a kind of plaster mixed and made of honey and fresh flour of the best wheat: and therefrom those worms suck and take their nourishment, otherwise they would torment her even to death: and if this flour were old and not fresh, those worms would not have such, or use that plaster. All these things have been proved and found thus by experience: and now those openings are closed.

“Every fortnight also the above-named virgin and maid receives the most holy and venerable sacrament of the altar, the Eucharist; and the priest who communicates her must needs use skill and care when he communicates her: otherwise she could not receive or swallow the Eucharist. And then he gives her very little water: which also she cannot very well pass, or swallow, but first she works it in her throat for a time, as one who gargles; and sometimes he gives her no water on account of the difficulty of passing or receiving the same. Moreover, this virgin and maid from below even to the stomach is utterly and wholly putrefied; and it is needful to close this wound with a little cushion of wool made especially for the purpose, about the size of a fist: otherwise her intestines and lower parts would quite fall away. And thus in truth the marvels and portents, which in the said virgin and maid have been wrought and are still daily wrought, are exceedingly great and so numerous and varied, that they cannot be clearly and fully written, or described by the pen. The oft-named virgin and maid was also fourteen years of age, when her ailment first overtook and befell her.

“And whereas we, the Baillif, the Mayor, the Bourgmaestres, Sheriffs and Councillors aforesaid have been well and fully informed and certified of the above written details, yea daily well perceive and witness them : therefore we seal the present letters for a plain and true testimony, with our seal which we use for cases, appended in the year of the Lord, 1421, on the eve of the Blessed Mary Magdalene, the twenty-first day of the month of July.”

In common with the hagiographers of his time, our Author does not follow the chronological order in his Life. Moreover, he gives us very few dates. The same negligence is observable in other details, as for instance in the names of personages who figure in the story. In fact, he wrote simply for the edification of his brothers in religion, and for this purpose doubtless he considered such items superfluous, even when he did not regard them as

already known. Nevertheless he had a very definite scheme of his own in the arrangement of books and chapters. In the First Book he narrates, and that in a roughly consecutive order, an account of the progress and variety of Lydwine's physical sufferings, and a history of her corporal works of mercy, together with the miraculous favours whereby God showed His appreciation of her charity. The mention of her poverty leads him to speak of the spirit of poverty and other virtues, and of the death of her father. This induces him to digress further and dwell on the good qualities of her grandfather, and finally of the passing away of her mother. Moreover, it must not be forgotten that these successive bereavements were a part and a very sensible part of the afflictions of the saint; for she was tenderly attached to the members of her family, and one after another she saw them taken away from her. The Author returns to this subject also in the Second Book. This Second Book treats more directly of the inner, spiritual life of the Saint, and of the prodigious graces of which she was finally the object. Here again he roughly outlines the progress from the innocence, not free from thoughtlessness and other faults, of childhood to the ripe perfection attained after long years of patient suffering and almost uninterrupted union with God. The three miracles, with which he fittingly closes his history, he received, as he tells us himself, directly from Dr. William Sonderdank, an eyewitness and a medical man.

As, however, it may assist the modern reader to a better appreciation of the affecting story of this servant of God to have an idea of the chronological sequence of events, I give here a brief epitome of the biography, arranged according to the few dates which a Kempis and Brugman have supplied.

1380. The Saint's mother is painlessly delivered of a daughter during the singing of the Passion, Palm Sunday, March 18th.

1380–1394. Lydwine passes a bright childhood in a poor, but very Christian household, and is remarked for her piety and other rich gifts both of nature and grace. Her father receives on her behalf some very advantageous offers of marriage, but the child declares her intention of remaining always a maid. About her fourteenth year she is stricken with illness, and then, before she is quite recovered, she receives a fatal fall upon the ice, February 2nd, 1394.

1394–1397. These three years are a sad period of material and spiritual neglect. One malady succeeds another: the child suffers and frets. At this time she receives Holy Communion once a year, at Easter-tide, when she is carried to the Church for the purpose. However, the miracle narrated in Chapter V. shows that even then the maid must have been possessed of remarkable purity and singleness of purpose.

1398. About this time her confessor, John Pot, taught the invalid how to meditate upon the Passion of Christ. This she finds very difficult at first, but with persevering efforts and especially with the grace brought by a fervent Communion, she acquires great recollection, and now begins to feel happiness in her pains, recognising therein God's will and her special vocation. At the same time the Confessor commences to communicate her twice a year.

1400. Lydwine took to her bed, never again to touch the earth in life or after death.

1402. About this date Lydwine's mother, Petronilla, died. This event marks a real epoch in the Saint's life, for, having generously ceded all her merits to her dying mother, she now regarded herself as under a necessity to compensate for this loss by renewed efforts and redoubled penance.

1405. It was about this time that the Saint commenced that series of wonderful ecstasies, which were to continue with but few interruptions until her death.

1406. is marked as a year of a very severe winter, during which Lydwine suffered indescribably from the cold.

1413. About this time commences Lydwine's complete fast from all food save the Holy Eucharist, although indeed hitherto her nourishment had been so scanty as scarcely to deserve the name. From the same epoch dates her entire freedom from sleep.

1421. This is the date of the magisterial inquiry, the result of which has been given above. In this document her confessor is mentioned as communicating her once a fortnight. But henceforth until her death she received habitually in the intervals of two days between her quartan fevers.

1423. is the date of the death of her brother William, over which Lydwine grieved so intensely as to be deprived for some time of her wonted spiritual consolations.

1425. The sufferings endured by Lydwine at the hands of the Duke of Burgundy's mercenaries merit for her a martyr's crown.

1426. witnesses the death of the Saint's beloved niece Petronilla, and therewith the snapping of the final cord of an affection, which, however pure and blameless, was not entirely for her Divine Spouse.

1433. April 14th, the Saint's happy death.

1434. A chapel is built in the cemetery by her tomb.

A few words now to bring the story of our Saint to the present day.

In accordance with her own wish Lydwine's house was transformed into a hospital, or home for aged females, by Dr. William Sonderdank, a physician remarkable for his piety and generosity, and devotion to the holy maid. It seems that this hospice was placed in the charge of Franciscan nuns; for Molanus says that these Sisters had a convent on the spot, with a chapel and altar in the very bedchamber of the virgin. "But," he adds, "the enemies of the Faith and of all piety utterly destroyed all this in the year 1572." The destruction, however, does not appear to have extended to the building itself, for this was used as an orphanage again in 1605, and was rebuilt in 1771.

To prevent the profanation of the Saint's relics during the religious troubles of the sixteenth century, the Catholic party under the Archduchess Isabelle and Prince Albert bought Lydwine's mortal remains from the Reformers, 1615, and translated them to Brussels, where Matthias, Archbishop of Mechlin and Primate of Belgium, after due authentication, authorised their veneration, granting to the same effect an indulgence of forty days. A copy of the Metropolitan's Act, dated Jan. 14th, 1616, is to be found in the Bollandists, *loc. cit.*

The same year, 1616, the Archduchess made a present of a portion of the holy relics to the Canonesses Regular of Mons, in Hainault, on the occasion of a plague which was devastating that city. Ten years later a further and very considerable portion of the relics was bestowed by the same Princess on the Carmelite Nuns of Brussels, whose convent she had founded in 1606. Finally, at Isabelle's death, the remainder of the relics were transferred with great pomp to St. Gudule's, the Cathedral Church of Brussels.

The official documents concerning all these translations and of these various marks of public honour paid to the relics were happily never lost—

an exact copy is given in the Bollandists—and thus it came to pass that when within the last fifty years advances were made at Rome to obtain Papal recognition and approbation of the veneration of the faithful to the holy maid Lydwine, there was no difficulty in proving the fact of the cultus ab immemorabili tempore.

It was on the strength of this immemorial cultus that, after all the tedious process and scrupulous details wherewith such grave matters are ever regulated in the Eternal City, Pope Leo XIII issued a short Decree, dated March 14th, 1890, solemnly approving the veneration paid to the virgin Lydwine under the title of Blessed, or Saint. At the same time an Office and Mass of the Saint were approved for the Diocese of Harlem; and the Carmelites of Brussels were requested to bestow a portion of her relics on the Church of Our Lady of the Visitation, Schiedam, one of the three Churches, which to-day minister to the spiritual needs of the ten thousand Catholics who now dwell in St. Lydwine's native town.

It was there that the present writer had the happiness of seeing and venerating the holy relics, in the July of 1906. Ever since I had taken up the study of the life and times of the Venerable Thomas à Kempis, I had longed to pay a visit to the scenes amid which his days were passed. I read with intense interest the graphic account of such a visit given by Sir Francis Cruise in his *Thomas à Kempis* (Kegan Paul & Co., 1837), and I promised myself that if the opportunity should be mine, I also would pass over the same holy ground. The opportunity presented itself in 1906 and pocketing Dr. Cruise's work as my Baedeker, and a more reliable guide could not be desired, I made a little à Kempis pilgrimage by way of Kempen, Deventer, Zwolle, this last of course including Agnetenberg and Windesheim, and finally, in the interests of the present volume, Schiedam.

With regard to my visit to the first three named towns there is little to add to what has been already so well described in the treatise just cited. I note merely that at Kempen, the oil painting of the Venerable Thomas, which Sir Francis Cruise found in the old Franciscan Church, now hangs in the Study Hall of the splendid Collegium Thommaeum, a Convictus or Boarding House for scholars from a distance who attend the courses in the fine Grammar School opposite. Likewise the portrait formerly hung in the Town Hall is now preserved in the Kempen Museum, together with another portrait and several engravings and editions of à Kempis. In the Grammar

School Library there is a fine à Kempis collection, the initiative of which is due to Dr. Pohl, the painstaking Editor of the new critical issue of the *amnia Opera*, from which the present translation is taken.

Finally, since the date of Dr. Cruise's visit, there has been erected in the close of the Parish Church, and within view of the site of the birthplace of à Kempis, a magnificent statue in bronze, on a massive pedestal in black marble, representing our venerable Author in the habit of a Canon Regular, seated with a volume of the *Imitation* open in one hand and a pen in the other. On the front of the pedestal is engraved: Thomas von Kempen. On the back the words in Dutch: Raised by the Thomas Institute to the great son of Kempen, 1901. On Thomas' left the verses from the *Imitation*, book iv (iii) ch. I: "Happy the soul that heareth the Lord speaking within her; and from His mouth receiveth a word of consolation. Happy the ears that receive the accents of the divine whisper, and take no notice of the whisperings of the world." On the other side, the further quotation: "If thou didst know the whole Bible by heart and the sayings of all the philosophers, what would it all profit thee without the love of God and His grace? Vanity of vanity, and all is vanity, save loving God and serving Him alone." It is really a striking and most impressive monument, and one cannot but rejoice that the Venerable Thomas is thus remembered and honoured in his native town.

At Deventer I found things exactly as described by Sir Francis Cruise. There I had the consolation of gazing upon the skulls of Gerard Groote and Florentius Radewyn, which having been rescued from the old Parish Church in the time of the Reformation riots, are now reverently preserved in the sacristy of the Broedern Kirk. If I may add a personal note, I must say that I can never forget the intelligent courtesy and homely kindness of the Sacristan, or Koster, of this church. Indeed throughout my pilgrimage I met with the same consideration on all sides, which was in truth the more welcome, as "greatly daring" I had undertaken this tour alone and quite unacquainted with either German or Dutch.

The interest of the pilgrimage culminated at Zwolle, in which district the Venerable à Kempis passed by far the greater portion of his long, laborious career. But here also everything has been so thoroughly described before me by my friend, Dr. Cruise, that once more I must content myself with referring the reader to his interesting pages. Since his date, however, a

magnificent monument has been erected in the Church of St. Michael to enshrine the relics of à Kempis. This is minutely described in my Life of the Ven. Thomas à Kempis, (Washbourne, 1901); and I need not go over that ground again. There has been some talk recently of founding an à Kempis Museum in Zwolle, which is, by the way, one of the neatest and prettiest little towns I have ever seen. While awaiting funds and a suitable locality for this purpose, two valuable portraits and many other items of interest are preserved in the central hall of an ancient hospice for the aged, named Emmanuel Huis; these were shown me with the utmost courtesy by M. Th. Heerkens, of Zwolle, a prominent member of the Upper Chamber of the States-General and an ardent à Kempist. Finally, there is a movement on foot to erect a statue to the Ven. Thomas in the public square of the town.

On my visit to Windesheim I was kindly accompanied by the Rev. B. M. Brom, Curate of St. Michael's, Nieustraat. Of the famous Canonry nothing remains, save part of the Infirmary, now used as the Protestant temple of the little village. Let into the wall of this chapel are two tombstones, one with the recumbent figure of a priest, with chalice, &c., and an almost illegible inscription deciphered by F. Haefer, President of the Society of Thomas à Kempis, and furnished me by Fr. Brom, as follows: (Hic jacent) venerabiles et devoti viri Theodorus de Herxen et dominus (Gerardus Scatte de Calkar).

I come now to the last stage of my pilgrimage, and that which more directly concerns the present volume, Schiedam, the native town of St. Lydwine. Here I parted company with my genial guide, Sir Francis Cruise, but I knew that another, J.-K. Huysmans, had been here also before me.

The first object of my inquiry was the Church of the Visitation, where, as related above, the relics of St. Lydwine are preserved. I called upon the Pastor and explained the motive of my visit, expressing at the same time a desire to celebrate holy Mass at the shrine of the Saint. Unfortunately, this privilege was just then impracticable: the Church was undergoing one of those thorough "spring cleanings" of which the good Hollanders are so prodigal, and one altar only was available for the holy Sacrifice. The Pastor, however, consoled me by promising to have the relics exposed for my veneration on the morrow. He was as good as his word, and the next morning I had the happiness of praying before the exposed relics of the holy maid, whom I had learnt to reverence and love, as I unravelled the story of her sufferings, virtues, and rewards from the quaint Latin of à Kempis.

The relics are enshrined in a very fine altar, constructed in an exquisite little chapel off the south aisle. In bas-relief over the centre stands a figure of the Saint, holding a crucifix, and before her an Angel presenting her the traditional rose-branch. On the right hand of the reliquary is another bas-relief, representing Our Divine Saviour, attended by Angels and Saints, administering the last rites to the dying virgin: on the left, the Saint, as found by her neighbours immediately after death, her hands joined upon her breast, all traces of long years of disease banished, all and more than all her youthful freshness and beauty restored. Below, occupying the whole length of the altar, the Saint reclining, earnestly studying her crucifix, the Angel hovering near with the rose-branch.

Round the walls of the Chapel are depicted, with considerable verve and skill, seven epochs from the life of the Saint. The Statue of Our Lady of Schiedam smiles upon her in her childhood (Part I, chap. ii). The fateful fall on the ice (Part I, chap. iv). John Pot earnestly exhorts the sick maid to essay meditation upon the Passion of Christ (Part II, chap. i). The Miraculous Host (Part II, chap. xxii). Her ecstatic voyage to the Holy Land and vision of the Passion (Part II, chap. ii). The multiplication of bread, meat and money given in alms (Part I, chaps. xx, xxii). The brutal assault of the mercenaries of Picardy, in which an Angel is seen hovering above the Saint, holding ready a martyr's crown (Part II, chap. vii). Finally, the fire of Schiedam, where Angels again appear protecting the Saint (Part II, chaps. v, xvi).

Anent this last incident, it is worthy of note that the Saint is regarded by all, Catholics and Protestants alike, as the Guardian of the town against fire. It is certainly a remarkable fact that since her death no more than a single house has been burnt at a time, a significant record considering the inflammable material stored in such abundance in this town, known the world over for its Hollands, or Schiedam schnapps.

After I had duly noted these various points, the good Pastor further devoted a considerable portion of his much occupied time in showing me from the Parish Archives a collection of various documents, ancient and modern, connected with the history of the Saint and especially with the process of her recent canonization. It is not necessary to go into these details here: they would be more in place in a full and modern English life, such as that already quoted of J.-K. Huysmans in French, or that other

which M. l'Abbé Cordurier so charmingly composed for the comfort and edification of his "dear incurables of the Hospital of Bourg." What chiefly interested me at the time was an old Dutch translation of à Kempis' Life of the Saint, and a series of twenty-two quaint little woodcuts, depicting various incidents from her story.

The Curé also informed me that devotion to St. Lydwine is very popular in the town, and that in his Church there is a special service in her honour every Thursday evening, for which is used a manual of prayers compiled for the purpose by his predecessor. I noticed statues of the Saint in the two other Catholic Churches of Schiedam, served by Dominicans, who in fact ministered to the spiritual needs of this district even through the Reformation days.

One other most interesting relic I was also conducted to see, the ancient marble slab which formerly covered the Saint's tomb. This, it is said, was placed face down—the figure of the Saint is sculptured thereon—in the pavement of the now Protestant Church to prevent Catholics coming to pay their devotions to it. Another account asserts that Protestants themselves out of respect would walk round rather than tread upon it. Be that as it may, one dark night the precious slab disappeared from its dishonoured resting-place. Through inability or connivance the authorities made no active pursuit. And now the stone with its figure and its inscription, giving the date of Lydwine's death in old Dutch, may be seen in the tiny Chapel of the Dominican convent, close to the Church of the Visitation. While I was examining it there, the old ladies who are tended and sheltered by the gentle Sisters in their destitution or infirmity, dropped in one by one to pay their visit or tell their beads, and the thought passed through my mind how pleased St. Lydwine must be that this relic should be preserved in a Christian home for the poor and aged, such as she had destined her own house to be.

I visited also the ancient parish Church of St. John the Baptist, rebuilt after the fire in St. Lydwine's own days, and for so long the resting-place of her holy remains. On my way I noted a gay wedding party issue from the portals of the Town Hall, and this incident, in contrast with the utter void of the huge empty white-washed building of St. John's—its whole furniture the bare wooden benches ranged round the organ and reading desks—

seemed to me a striking illustration of the sad changes wrought by the religious revolt of the sixteenth century.

It is round this venerable Church that what remains of ancient Schiedam still survives, and as I wandered about amid its narrow streets, quaint bulging buildings, frequent canals and wooden drawbridges, it was not so difficult for the imagination to people and animate the scene again with the personages and incidents of the Life of St. Lydwine.

But, for the rest, it is well understood that Schiedam is not a town of which Dutchmen boast, or to which tourists crowd. Its staple industry is gin, and the whole atmosphere is impregnated with the odour of the boiling grain used in the manufacture; and were it not for the redeeming native virtue, this town alone of all that I had seen in the Netherlands would be positively dirty.

To conclude, the text, on which the following translation is based, is that of Dr. Pohl, edited from the autograph of à Kempis, which is preserved in the University Library, Louvain. There the original may be seen bound in one volume with Thomas' Sermons to the Novices Regular, the caligraphy still beautifully clear and legible.

The footnotes throughout are the Translator's.

St. Ives, Cornwall,

All Hallows, 1910.

LIFE OF LYDWINE, VIRGIN

PART I

PROLOGUE TO THE LIFE OF LYDWINE, VIRGIN

To the Religious Brethren, Canons Regular of the monastery of St. Elizabeth, near Briel in the country of Zeeland. Brother N., a poor pilgrim, humbly begging the suffrages of your prayers. Most beloved brothers in Christ, since we profess the same Order and Rule, it is just that according to the saying of St. James the Apostle we pray for one another, and adorn our faith with good works, and keep the bond of charity in true love. May your fraternity then deign to know that at the request of your brethren I have read through the book of the life of the holy and most patient virgin Lydwine: and as you have long desired I now out of charity send you the same to read composed in a style more brief and clear. Do not take it ill that I have delayed; nor attribute to presumption what I have done: because the counsel of your venerable Prior came and urged me to the doing. For what seemed at first difficult to me, by the help of God through your prayers has at length arrived at completion. I have divided the whole matter of the book into two parts, and to each part I have prefixed its own chapters. Also by the advice of certain religious I have omitted many things which seemed liable maybe to cause doubt or nice questioning to some simple souls. I have chosen therefore from many things to write and gather rather those which might instruct in virtue and clearly show a way of humble imitation to those who should read. But they are almost all fit subject for wonder, surpassing my experience; and I leave the judgment of them to my betters. But I trust that the prayers of the humble will be more pleasing and acceptable to God and the holy virgin herself, than to search into lofty things, and foolishly gossip of the secrets of God. Let it not disturb anyone if the name is spelt

sometimes Lydia or Lydwine, for this is found in other histories of the saints: as Agna is suitably written for Agnes, Walburga for Walburgis. We read of a Lydia in the Acts of the Apostles, whom Paul the Apostle converted, and in whose house he received hospitality; and our Lydia willingly received many religious to discourse of things divine: and taught by a holy angel she very often brought the grace of heavenly comfort to the troubled of heart.

CHAPTER I

OF THE BIRTHPLACE AND BIRTH OF THE VIRGIN LYDWINE, AND THE PROBITY OF HER PARENTS

On the western coast of Holland is situated a certain city called from a neighbouring stream Schiedam, which God, Who is mighty and wonderful in His saints, adorned with the wondrous and unexampled patience of a certain holy virgin. This virgin was rightly called in effect and name from her much suffering Lydwine; because, scourged by divers sicknesses, she became most pleasing to her heavenly Spouse Christ. By the lovers of the world, while she lived, she was deemed poor and mean; but by the Creator of Heaven she was chosen as a most precious pearl out of the waves of the sea, and in the heavenly kingdom placed most high with the holy virgins. Her origin was noble from a military family; but it was made more noble and illustrious by the grace of the Holy Ghost coming upon her. Her father was called Peter; who, although he was noble of lineage according to the dignity of the world, nevertheless by the permission of God he had come down to such poverty that in the time of Duke William, the son of Albert Duke in the County of Holland, he sought food and the necessaries of life by keeping the night watches of the city; whereby to support himself and his family decently. This Peter, when after the manner usual with men in the world he had earned his livelihood in simplicity in much toil for some years, took to wife one Petronilla, a woman of great probity and virtue, befitting his name and nobility; who by the gift of God flourished with the seed of many children, and, fearing God, strove to rule her house religiously. She begot eight sons, and one daughter named Lydwine, whom

certain Latinists call Lydia, concerning whom the present discourse intends to relate the many marvels which God wrought by her before many witnesses. Although, therefore, being the mother of so many children she had suffered the greatest labour in the birth of each, nevertheless in the bringing forth of this daughter she felt almost no pain. For having entered the Church on Palm Sunday, feeling that the time of her childbirth was at hand, with speed she returned home; and almost without any great pain she brought forth this child of election during the reading of the Lord's Passion, in the year of the Lord's Incarnation, one thousand three hundred and eighty, on the fifteenth of the Kalends of April on the morrow of Gertrude Virgin, in the time of Pope Urban the Sixth, the third year of his pontificate, the reverend prelate Florentius, dear both to the clergy and the whole people, sitting in the See of lower Utrecht. This daughter then, having been born in the fifth place in the order of children, and regenerated in the baptism of Christ, received the name of Lydwine, or Lydia, given her by her parents. She was truly an ornament among the daughters of men and a mirror of modesty; but by the ordinance of God from eternity she soon became a devout contemplator of the Lord's Passion and conformed to the crucified by many wounds of bodily sickness.

CHAPTER II

OF HER DEVOTION TO THE IMAGE OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN

When this maiden, then, was seven or eight years of age, by the inspiration of God she commenced to have a great devotion to the image of the blessed Virgin Mary, which stood in the church of Schiedam. The townsmen of that city relate that this statue was obtained very miraculously and bought for a small sum from a certain man, the sculptor of the said image. For when he, wishing to go to the fair at Antwerp and sell the image there at a better price, had gone on board ship, taking the image with him, the image became of such a great weight that twenty or more men could not move the boat from the shore. Seeing this, the seamen in amaze considered that the difficulty of moving the vessel came from the presence of the image, and that it wished to have the place of its dwelling there. After a brief counsel, then, the artist sold the image to the citizens, who for reverence set aside a special choir to it in the church. And later in honour of the blessed and glorious Mary ever a Virgin many of the townspeople of both sexes associating together instituted a certain confraternity. And this image was of wood and so light that one man could easily have borne it. This image therefore the young maiden, when she had carried their dinner to her two brothers who went to school, before she returned home, entering the church, lovingly visited; and she devoutly strove to honour the same as best she could by the angelic salutation. And this good and praiseworthy beginning indeed was remarkable in her childish days, and it was a presage of greater grace in the future, from the years of her youth even to the end of her life. When therefore she was reproached by her mother for her late return, the dove without gall replied, that she had entered the church to greet the

blessed Virgin, and that she in turn had smiled upon her. Hearing which her mother was satisfied, and gently contented ceased to trouble her. For she was a dear and only daughter; and she was found worthily engaged in the work of God and the praise of the blessed Virgin, and was not therefore to be restrained from her devotion.

CHAPTER III

OF HER STRONG PURPOSE IN THE STATE OF VIRGINITY

Having passed the years of infancy, when she was now advancing in the age of girlhood, she was endowed with such beauty of body and quickness of mind and other gifts of nature bestowed on her by God, that when she was twelve years old she was sought by many in marriage. To the which her father exhorted her; the mother would by no means agree because of her ignorance and youth, but rather dissuading, asked him not to disturb her. Then she with constancy answered her father, that he would never induce her to this; yea, that if there were no other means of escape she would treat herself in such wise that no one would seek her in wedlock. Wherefore she daily besought the Lord that He would take all harmful and fleshly love away from her heart, that she might be able to love Him alone, her God and Lord, with pure heart and body, Whose prayers and desires the loving and merciful Lord heard without delay, Who had chosen her from eternity a spouse unto Himself; and providing by a wondrous dispensation, He accomplished her will in much bodily suffering, according to that saying of His holy word. “Every branch that beareth fruit My Father will purge it; that it may bring forth more fruit” (John xv 2). For the earth was good, producing the flowers of modesty; but lest the vanities of the world or the delights of the flesh should violate the seal of virginity, Christ hedged it round with thorns and most grievous pains, that it might not be fit for any nuptial bed.

CHAPTER IV

OF THE BEGINNING OF HER WEAKNESS, AND THE OCCASION OF HER LONG ILLNESS

When therefore she was in her fifteenth year, lest she might begin to wander after the flocks of her worldly companions, the physician of souls, Christ, lovingly visited her for the salvation of her soul and fettered her with a certain bodily weakness, from which afterwards she partially recovered. It happened then at the end of the fifteenth year of her age about the feast of the Purification of the blessed Virgin Mary, that she was invited by her girl companions to go with them upon the ice shod with skates; when one of her comrades going along over the ice at a rapid pace, and unable to stop herself, caught Lydia by the hand; and before long she suddenly fell upon some fragments of ice, and, seriously hurt, broke a small rib in her right side. From which fracture many pains befell her, and increased. For first a hard abscess grew round the place of the broken rib; and although her parents expended much to heal it, nevertheless they were not able to obtain the wished for cure. And when no one could heal her, and she had been frequently moved from place to place, from bed to bed, as the violence of her disease demanded; at length in the sixteenth year of her age, on the vigil of St. John Baptist, when her father had come to her to console her, she, starting up from the place where she lay, in her weakness fell doubled up upon the knees of her father. And in this brusque movement the abscess was broken, and the matter flowed in abundance through her mouth with vomiting; and thereupon she became so feeble that she was thought to be almost dead. From that time forward she now began to be afflicted with

constant infirmities, in which, before she had the taste of things spiritual, she accepted human and bodily remedies, as need required; although they profited but little, and did not relieve her pain. And so for the first three years of her sickness at Eastertide she was taken or carried to the church for Holy Communion; and as she could not stand or walk upon her feet she used a stick or a crutch, creeping along inside or out of doors. Often also she drank copiously of the cold water of the ditch, although it was muddy; or, coming to the fire, she would take it hot or warm from the saucepans, which nevertheless she immediately threw up from her weakened stomach. For want then of human counsel, and with an increase of careless management, her body wasted away; but the soul in its vessel of clay was preserved by a hidden grace for great merit hereafter, that in her might be accomplished what is read of blessed Job. “Behold, Satan, he is in thy hand: but yet save his life” (Job ii 6).

CHAPTER V

OF THE OPINION OF A CERTAIN DOCTOR, AND THE MIRACLE THAT BEFELL HER

A certain doctor from Delft, Master Andrew by name, visiting her, told her parents as in prophecy, that by no means would she obtain health, even if they should expend a large sum of English nobles for her. The same experienced Master, to console her parents and kinsfolk, also added that God would work such and so great supernatural wonders in her, that for a weight of gold the size of the maiden's head he would wish that she were his daughter: for from such an offspring he would hope to receive the greatest joy.

And there befell, in the aforesaid three years while the maiden, was lying abed ill, a thing very miraculous, which God deigned to manifest to the glory of His name and to make known the virgin's merit. Two men in the city excited in mind against one another began to quarrel, and one pursued the other with a drawn sword to strike and wound, or kill him. The other of them therefore in terror fled to the house and chamber of this maiden, that hiding there he might escape the hands of his pursuer. Whom the other following soon after, asked of her mother Petronilla whether he had entered the house. And she, wishing to save the fugitive by her lie and to hinder the pursuer from shedding blood, answered him that he had not entered. But he, not believing the words of the mother, went into the inner room of the sick girl. And when he had asked her whether he had entered her chamber, the holy virgin with hope in God confidently replied in the affirmative. At which answer her mother, being angry, gave her daughter a blow, as if she

had added to her misery the treason of malice by her incautious words. Then the daughter replied to the mother with constancy: "I therefore told the truth, because I hoped that the truth would conceal him who fled to it." Which also happened, by the providence of God. For he who was sought unto death stood before the eyes of his pursuer, and was quite unseen. He departed therefore, giving over the pursuit of the fugitive, not knowing that the power of God had been there. Seeing which, her mother extolled the faith of her daughter far exalted above her faith, or rather her want of faith; and henceforth she conceived a fuller love towards her, and began to bear her infirmities more kindly.

CHAPTER VI

OF THE SCANTINESS OF HER NOURISHMENT FOR MANY YEARS

After this her maladies increased and multiplied so much, that deprived of all strength of body she was entirely confined to her bed, so that for the space of thirty-three years before her death she did not touch the ground. And her nourishment after the first three years until the nineteenth year of her sickness was of a food slight and little, and that cannot be conceived sufficient for the sustenance of so very ailing a human life. Sometimes she took a small piece of apple warmed over the fire, sometimes a little bread with a slight sip of white beer, sometimes a little fresh milk. Afterwards, however, she could not take such things for weakness of body; for some years she drank through the week half a pint of pure wine, without any admixture, which nevertheless later for some years it was necessary to mingle with water. Sometimes also she would eat a little spice of sugar or cinnamon, or musk, or grapes. But when she could no longer take these eating or sucking, she took only water, namely half a pint of the water of the Meuse a week; which by a special gift of God brought her such sweetness, that it surpassed all flavour of wine; for the which she used to give great thanks to God. At the same time she received this favour from God, that by taste alone she distinguished between the water of the Meuse when the tide was in and when the tide was out, when she took the cup brought her, with a draught therefrom. For many years there was that also which is more to be wondered at, that she had no sleep and took no bodily food or drink except the body of Christ, the sole remedy of all her pains, and a most sweet solace, most savoury to her above all food.

CHAPTER VII

OF THE VARIOUS ILLNESSES AND PAINS THAT TORMENTED HER DAY AND NIGHT

In this virgin was accomplished what is read of blessed Job. “In the night my bone is pierced with sorrows; and they that feed upon me do not sleep: with the multitude of them my garment is consumed” (Job xxx 17). And so with the failure of medical arts and of the nourishment of food, her weakness daily grew worse. And the maiden pitiably afflicted lay upon a hard couch and was eaten by worms which, rising from her virginal body out of the putrefaction, consumed her flesh: and nevertheless no stench proceeded from them. These worms were of a grey colour full of grey water, having black heads, large as the thickness of the end of a spindle, long as the measure of the small joint of a man’s finger.

She had also, disciple of the holy Trinity, in her body three large openings, from one of which in the stomach the aforesaid worms sometimes flowed abundantly. To this wound was placed a plaster made up of fresh wheat and honey, that the generated worms might feed on this mixture and other ingredients; for else they would have eaten her even to death. And when these plasters were taken off to be changed, there remained on them little grey worms with black heads, giving forth from them no bad odour, but offering a sweet smell to those who beheld them. The same virgin then was corrupt in the lower part of the body with a permanent and large wound; and that her holy bowels might not altogether fall out, they closed the opening with some soft bandage.

It happened at that time that the famous physician of the Duke of Holland, Master Godfrey of Hague, came to visit this maiden with the Duchess Margaret, to examine the cause of her maladies; in order to give the maiden some wholesome remedy if he could. Who, as was permissible and befitting, having seen some of the intestines of her stomach which were taken from her body and placed in a dish, found that the aforesaid worms came from the putrefaction of the spinal cord of her back; and that that putrefaction was caused by a natural consequence, because she ate no salt. After which, seeing that he could do no good for her, he bade that the intestines be replaced again in her stomach. The same doctor also remarked, that in a short time she would be dropsical. And she contracted this dropsy about nineteen years before her death, during which she took neither food nor drink nor sleep. And as she received no nourishment, so she voided no natural superfluities.

About the year of the Lord, 1412, this sacred plant of God, dug about by the long hoe of suffering, from the vehemence of her pains vomited by little pieces her lung and liver, with several intestines, but without any stench, as was proved by many. For those who touched them with their hands, felt a sweetness cling to their hands for nearly a day. From the fourteenth year until the twenty-first she could nowise move or turn herself; and she lay on her back that seven years and after even to death, nor could any part of her body move, except her head and left arm with the shoulder. But when she was moved or turned in bed, then it was necessary to bind round her shoulders with a cloth or soft bandage; otherwise there was a danger that she would fall to pieces.

Very many other maladies also the virgin of Christ girded with most cruel scourges suffered; which were inflicted upon her not to the loss of her soul, but to her greater merit as on holy Job, so that afterwards she might be the more capable and meet for angelic and heavenly consolations, the more distressed and desolate she lay upon earth. She often had excessive headaches even unto death, very often manifold toothache even unto death, divers fevers also even unto death, a long dropsy even unto death, at the time of pestilence three abscesses, a very great stone also before death, with which likewise she paid the debt of death. All this for very many years she suffered most patiently, that her soul might be saved for ever, and with Christ exult in the delights of Paradise. For the more bodily sicknesses

abounded in her, so much the greater grew in her the love, strong as death, of God and her neighbour. For from the plenitude of her charity and the urgency of her internal fervour, she dared in a certain way to provoke the Lord to multiply upon her miseries and pains. And the Lord hearkening to her prayers, when she had two abscesses in her body, added a third on her breast. In fine, she suffered from all the common infirmities wherewith men are usually afflicted, the which she lovingly bore with wondrous and unparalleled patience for the love of Christ, mindful of all His even greater dolours. There was scarcely any part of her body which did not waste away with some special affliction of suffering. For on her forehead she had a fracture extending to the middle of the nose; likewise on the lower lip and chin a cleft congealed with blood, and because of this malady she could hardly speak. Her right eye was altogether sightless; and her left remained so weak, that it could make use of no material light by day or by night, yea even she felt torture from any brightness of light. Wherefore she constantly lay in darkness; and a simple curtain surrounded and veiled the place of her bed, so that seldom was she openly seen by men. But yet she very often saw an angel of light to the comfort of her exceeding great torture.

CHAPTER VIII

OF THE SEVERITY OF HER FEVER AND A FRESH DISEASE IN HER LEG

This rose of Christ suffered long and divers fevers, often quartan, often tertian, and often daily. Amid which thorns of affliction she simply gave up her body to the will and chastisement of God to be crucified; at Whose bidding all things were ordered unto the good of her soul, and much better than any man could foreknow or design. And in fact the tertian fevers she endured for seventeen years and more: which for the salvation and redemption of souls, she was willingly ready to bear even to death. The attacks of these fevers was as follows. For first she felt an indescribable heat, which was followed by an indescribable cold. Then again the aforesaid heat and afterwards the intense cold returned: which vicissitudes lasted for nearly half the year. But afterwards she would have the same fever the other way; for first she was in a great and indescribable cold, and then in an immense heat, which lasted until the torture finally ceased. But when the fever gave over she would be so insensible that, unconscious of herself, she could neither hear nor speak. For when she felt the attack of the fever she applied herself to exercise of the Lord's Passion, commending herself and her sufferings to the Passion of Him in Whom all bitter things are sweetened. Who often withdrew her by excess of mind from corporal things so that she noticed neither herself nor anything else whatsoever. And during this fever, she sent out a certain red water from her mouth; and when she was questioned whence such matter came, seeing that she took neither food nor drink, she answered by a question thus. "Tell me whence so much sap comes in the vine; which during winter seems withered and almost dead?" But the virgin of Christ was comforted exceedingly in her so weak body

by taking up a good meditation on God; and she was much more refreshed thereby than another would have been by most costly foods. And if the presence of men and her maladies had not hindered her, she would not have wondered if on account of the abundance of divine grace each month, she had fattened the flesh in her body beyond the measure of a Hamburg vat.

Once also before the beginning of the fast, while the people were amusing themselves in the square near her cell, she grieved much over these vanities, and prayed God that if it were pleasing to Him in her regard, or if He Himself wrought those things in her which she suffered, He would deign to show her this by the sign of a new illness. And the Lord, hearing her prayers, gave her in one of her legs a fresh troublesome disease. With which malady indeed she was so grievously afflicted until the next Easter, that conscious of her weakness she did not dare to beg for a further increase of her infirmities. But she was wont to say in her daily sicknesses to some who constantly assisted her, that she was quite willing to bear them for forty years; yea even to the end of the world for the conversion of any sinner, or for the deliverance of any faithful soul from the pains of Purgatory. For although she was weighed down by such great maladies, she retained the full use of her senses, and a quick intelligence and memory, so that to many who came from distant parts to visit her asking advice, she afforded comfort in spiritual things as well as healing in bodily needs. Many women also labouring in childbirth, she relieved by loving compassion and the assistance of her counsel. In the midst of these divine gifts she was not puffed up, nor did she presume loftily concerning her future glory, but bowing down her heart in humility, she most patiently bore all her burdens in charity, and feared as if she were to suffer Purgatory after this life. But she merited such grace with God that the holy angels numbered the steps of those who visited her for the sake of devotion. Wherefore she used to console her visitors, who sometimes complained of the weariness of their journey; that they should not grieve for their fatigue, because God would render them a good reward for their toil.

CHAPTER IX

OF THE HARDNESS OF HER BED AND THE COLD SHE SUFFERED IN WINTER

Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ commending St. John Baptist amid many virtues for his rough raiment and abstinence, added also this. “For they, that are clothed in soft garments, are in the houses of kings” (Matt. xi 8). But this virgin was not nourished in a royal palace; but in her father’s house, oppressed by divers and grievous maladies, she used for a time under the stress of her exceeding great weakness a small feather bed, not to caress the flesh by softness, but to support the weakness of nature a little in order that it might serve the spirit. But when from the multitude of her wounds she could not bear a bed of feathers, because the feathers hardened by the oozing matter tormented her as she lay, the easy bed was taken away and for a time she lay upon the bare straw; for three years she even rested uneasily with her naked back upon a hard plank taken from the bottom of a bin. Lying therefore upon wretched straw, the poor virgin full of sores, the sister of the beggar and poor man Lazarus, left her bed to the son and daughter of her brother for their rest; who day and night by mutual charity in turn ministered to her needs.

About the year of the Lord, 1408, so severe a cold reigned through the world the whole winter, that in duration and bitterness it afflicted men much more than usual, and destroyed the plants of the earth and the fishes under the water. In this most terrible winter the sick slave of Christ covered with wounds was frequently so frozen from the fearful cold and her nakedness, that her limbs became black, and the tears of her eyes congealed; so that she was unable to see except by melting them with the application of heat. Very many other pains also she suffered at that time from the presence of the

cold, such as could scarcely be endured by the strong, and if the Author of nature had not supernaturally cared for and preserved her, she would undoubtedly have lost her life. In the accumulation of all these so many miseries and needs of her own, as a kind mother and loving nurse she was ever mindful of other poor, taking away from her own necessities in order to aid them in their want. However, the rich of this world who live in luxury, and exult in much wealth to the loss of their souls, were entirely forgetful of her, and stretched not a helping hand to the poor sufferer. Many also not knowing her holiness despised her, and deeming her mad mocked at her mental ecstasies. Then was fulfilled in her, that which is read of holy Job. “The simplicity of the just man is laughed to scorn; and the lamp despised in the thoughts of the rich” (Job xii 4, 5).

CHAPTER X

OF HER WATCHINGS AND STRUGGLE AGAINST SLEEP

It seems very wonderful and almost incredible to many, how the weak flesh could last in so many sufferings and pains, which for so long a time was nourished by neither food nor drink nor sleep. But if we remember the divine power, which makes possible the impossible, [we can understand that] the maid was able to bear all things in Him Who strengthened her; for that which is beyond nature was brought to pass by the work of God. Witnesses are the many martyrs and virgins thrown into the flames, who by God's ordering and protection were found not only very patient in their torments, but even full of joy; and what is more, they remained unharmed amid blows, swords, and fires. The hand of God then is not shortened, nor the arm of the Almighty feeble to save them that hope in Him; but in every place and time the Lord is near them that call upon and love Him in truth. In this feeble servant of God therefore let the work of the Divinity be acknowledged, and the weakness of man cease to distrust. Which, while it depends upon its own opinions for natural reasons, very often fails and is blinded in its search. For nature must needs be silent when the divine speaks; and earthly things yield when the things of Heaven are treated. This virgin, then, lying so long on the bed of pain, was not forgetful of her Creator, but mindful of the name of the Lord day and night, she gave herself fervently to holy meditations and prayers; and especially at the time of the Divine Office and the celebration of the High Mass. Whence how strongly she struggled against and overcame sleepiness, is worth the telling and pleasant to hear. It is commonly the habit of many men, to be more tempted to sleep at the time of the Divine Office, whether from their own weakness

or from the suggestion of the devil, who ever strives to oppose man's salvation and devout prayers. When therefore the scholar of Christ, having learnt to pray often, felt herself more than usually weighed down and tempted by the spirit of torpor and drowsiness at the time of the Divine Office, although she was wont to sleep very little at that period, nevertheless she grieved much within herself over this temptation of sloth, and dared not yield to it. Her confessor therefore fearing that danger threatened her if she did not sleep, urged her with a view to her health not to resist drowsiness any more, but whatever feast might come at whatever time or hour to set herself to sleep. On a certain Easter Sunday, then, when the same temptation coming grievously molested her; she mindful of the Lord very strongly resisted the drowsiness, according to what is written. "Resist the devil and he will fly from you." Having then gained this one victory over sleep, she was so strengthened against it by God, that she never slept after that until her death, nor was ever tempted with drowsiness. For as the holy angels, resisting the first temptation of pride, were confirmed in grace, and those who consented were cast out of Heaven, so to this victorious virgin was given the gift of inviolable fortitude in many watchings and in stripes afflicting her beyond measure; by which she was proved as gold is tried in a burning furnace (Wisdom iii 6).

CHAPTER XI

OF THE POVERTY AND ENDURANCE OF HER FATHER

This holy virgin's father, Peter Johns above named, although he had come to such poverty, that he toilsomely obtained the necessaries of life by keeping the night watches in the city, nevertheless he was so honest and conscientious that in his need he was unwilling to spend the alms of his daughter, saying that they would be the sins of men. Therefore he wished and he persuaded his beloved child, that she would use herself what was offered for God's sake, and expend it on pious purposes. It happened then in the aforesaid severe winter, that his limbs were numbed in the night watches from the excessive cold, and the big toe of the right foot was frostbitten. In which case indeed the probity of the man is shown; since he chose rather to endure the rigour of the cold, and to support himself by the labour of watching, than to eat up the alms of the poor. For it is written. "Thou shalt eat the labour of thy hands: blessed art thou and it shall be well with thee."

At the same time Duke William, with the Duchess Lady Margaret and a large company, entered the city of Schiedam; and noticing the poverty of Peter, a most noble man of a military family, moved with a pious compassion, out of reverence for the holiness of his daughter, he bade him ask with confidence from him, as much as he thought would suffice for his yearly expenses and needs. Who replying simply, asked for twelve crowns of France. The Duke himself marvelled at the modesty of the petitioner, and ordered that these crowns should be given him every year; declaring that he was ready to give double the amount, that he might not longer suffer such want. And this money was at first indeed faithfully paid; but afterwards it was bestowed on him less willingly, for the favour of man is quickly

exhausted in giving: blessed therefore the man who has his treasure in Heaven. And receiving this alms from the aforesaid Duke William, Peter, not elated because of the benefit bestowed on him, but grateful to God, constantly visited the church, intent on devout prayer as best he could, perfectly contented with his daily food and a moderate raiment.

CHAPTER XII

OF THE ILLUSION OF SATAN WHO CAST HER FATHER INTO A DITCH

And when this devout Peter was so weak from old age, that he could scarcely walk without falling frequently from any slight cause and returning home injured, nevertheless he did not refrain from visiting the church on account of his bruises and falls, but as if still possessed of youth, drawn by fervent devotion visited the temple of God, even against the wish of his daughter. For the holy child was anxious for her father's safety, more grieving and fearing for his danger than for the scourge of her own disease.

On one occasion, going out on the vigil of Pentecost to hear Vespers, he met the devil, who appeared to him in the likeness of one he knew, as it seemed outwardly. Who, wishing to deceive the simple man, suggested that they should go for a stroll outside the city, alleging that they would return in good time for the hour of Vespers. And he, not knowing that it was Satan, agreed, and they went together beyond the city gate to the place called Damlaen. Then the devil showing the wickedness of his deceit, suddenly rushed upon Peter, and before he saw or knew, cast him into a ditch and disappeared. And as he was there beginning to drown and there was no one at hand to aid, by divine providence a certain carter, an acquaintance of his, contrary to his wont came by the same way from the country with his waggon, wishing to enter the city, and he saw Peter lying in the ditch, and quite unable to help himself. And being moved with compassion he at once drew him out of the mud; and setting the injured man upon his cart, brought him back safe to the town. And immediately a false report unexpectedly assailed the ears of all; as if Peter had been drowned and was dead. And this news so afflicted the ears of his daughter, that she could never afterwards

recall that vigil without deep anguish because of the suffering of her father. For the crafty enemy reckoned to cause a great catastrophe to the virgin, if he added her father's distress to the pain of her own wounds. But God, the helper in afflictions and the comforter of the sorrowful, in a short while turned the father's weariness into rest, his grief into joy, his poverty into heavenly riches. For, consoled by the blessed virgin, he was snatched by a speedy and blissful end from the troubles of this world and the guiles of the devil.

CHAPTER XIII

OF THE DEATH OF HER FATHER ON THE VIGIL OF THE CONCEPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

A few days before the Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the devout maiden Lydwine, the daughter of Peter, foreknew that her father was about to pass from this world. For she said that she had heard in secret from her father, that the Blessed Virgin Mary had entered into a pact with him, and had promised that she would call him from the present world about this festival. Which also came to pass as she foretold. The most faithful maiden therefore warned Master John the priest who had come to her for advice; that the same day he should go to Ouderschie to celebrate, so that on the morrow nothing might be wanting for her father's funeral. After these words the death of her father took place on the vigil of the Conception of the Blessed Virgin, according to the vision and prophecy revealed before.

And after his death, although the maiden, deprived of the temporal solace of her father's presence, had asked and had been assured of the salvation of her father, the perverse demons, the enemies of all the good, sometimes saddened her exceedingly, asserting that they had her father with them in the state of damnation. Whereupon she commenced to weep inconsolably, as if what she had heard from the demons were true. Whence also when questioned by the members of the household why she wept so much, she answered, "I know that all is very well with my father, and nevertheless the demons say that he is lost." On one occasion, therefore, when she was being conducted by a holy angel to the gardens of paradise, the demons besetting her path, showed her a devil transformed into the likeness of her father,

mocking and tormenting, saying, “Ah, ah, look here, we have thy father.” Then she, knowing that the act of the devil was a vain illusion and not the truth, said that this could not be her father. And at once they vanished as smoke; and the maiden joyously continued her journey with the angel guide.

CHAPTER XIV

OF THE DEATH OF JOHN PETERS HER GRANDFATHER AND HIS LONG CONTINENCE

We must not pass over in silence the righteousness and continence of John Peters, who was the grandsire of this virgin and the parent of her father, to the praise of God and to exalt the dignity of this good family. This John Peters, then, of praiseworthy repute and life, after the death of his wife remained a widower more than fifty years, until he attained the ripe old age of nearly ninety. And he practised such continence and abstinence, that as a solitary turtledove and lover of chastity, after the death of his wife he never knew woman. Moreover, for the preservation of this continent life he fasted twice a week on bread and water, and once only, to wit on Sunday, he took meat at dinner. And at his death Satan the malignant ensnarer, seeing that he could not approach him, set up such a tumult in other parts of the house, that the earthenware vessels were broken, but without any loss or spilling of the butter which was kept in one of these jars. Nor is it strange if the devil dared beset and harm the most faithful servant of Christ, who inflicted the annoyance of temptations on Christ in His fast; from whom nevertheless he departed vanquished and put to shame, for the fraudulent one was unable to deceive the Almighty. And as the holy angels after the departure of the temptation drew near to Christ, so it is to be piously believed that the soul of John Peters was guarded by angels, and after the death of the flesh blissfully conducted to Christ whom he served in life.

CHAPTER XV

OF THE DEATH OF PETRONILLA HER MOTHER

It seems fitting also to insert in the present page the passing away of the noble woman Petronilla, the mother of this holy virgin, and to associate the woman to these noble men in due order of virtue. After eight years then had passed from the commencement of the virgin Lydwine's illness, her mother Petronilla, who had been most attentive to her ailing daughter, also fell into a sickness of the body; of which, as of one of the children of Eve, she died. When therefore she was nearing death, and giving heed to her imperfection, mourned that she had not lived righteously enough, she begged of her beloved child whom she knew to be pleasing and dear to God, that she would aid her when departed by her merits and prayers. And she, casting all her thought and hope upon the Lord, said that she was quite willing to die, renouncing her own choice so much, that she would not that the smallest little worm should die in her stead. Hearing this, the holy and faithful daughter, deeply touched, and compassionating her mother from her heart, urged her with holy words to trust in the goodness of God; so as to bear with patience the scourge of the Lord and death which none can escape. And therefore for her succour she most willingly offered her, and utterly resigned whatever meritorious good she had hitherto gained in the exercise of virtue, in toils and the endurance of patience. When her mother had heard and gratefully accepted this, trusting in the mercy of God she commended herself into the hands of her Creator. And the virgin, abiding faithful to her mother through all unto death, and considering what she had now done, and deeming herself as emptied of all her former good works, to commence afresh a new penance, girded herself with a hair girdle, hard and broad,

adding new pain to the old, that God might be propitious to her and to every faithful soul. But after some years the virgin girded with the hair cloth, when on account of the dropsical humours of her body, the first girdle was rotted, again with mighty zeal girds herself with another new one, and successively with many others that were laid aside as worn out, until with the last she passed from this life.

CHAPTER XVI

OF HER STATE AFTER HER MOTHER'S DEATH, AND HER PITY FOR THE POOR

After the death of her mother, the virgin, mindful of her mother's love, to pay the debt of filial affection, did not bury the talent entrusted to her in the earth; but the few silver ornaments, and all the other household utensils left by her mother for her use because of her pressing need, she sold at a low price; and the sum gained thereby, she so generously distributed to the poor, that in consoling the wretched she was brought to the utmost poverty. Those things also which she received from the faithful in alms, she passed on so cheerfully to the poor, as if she seemed to have no thought at all of temporal things. Thence from the money she had and from what was given for her needs, she sent to divers poor persons bread, meat, dried fish, and cheeses, and a measure of beer with a jug which her loving mother had left her; and if God bestowed anything further upon her, she faithfully gave it away. And while she sent these things by her attendants, in the meantime she gave herself to the leisure of devout prayers, rendering thanks to the giver of all good things, who had granted her something for the use of the poor.

CHAPTER XVII

OF THE BURNING OF HER BED WHICH SHE PUT OUT WITH ONE HAND WITHOUT ANY INJURY

On one occasion the brother of this virgin, who after his father also kept the night watches, set a lighted candle near the head of her bed in a high place of the corner and went out. And this falling on the straw burnt a great portion of the bed, but she with her face covered was engaged in her usual devotion. At length coming to herself and opening her eyes, she saw herself lying in the midst of a fire and no one near to put it out; by the help of God with her left hand she extinguished all the flame without any injury to her hand, to the great wonder of all who, coming in the morning to her, saw what had happened in the burning of the bed while the virgin remained unharmed. Nevertheless she at that time did not use a bed, but the children of her brother did, who were devoted in serving her; for she herself in her illness lay upon straw.

CHAPTER XVIII

OF THE ASHES MINISTERED TO HER BY AN ANGEL AT THE BEGINNING OF LENT

The most devout maiden, after the manner of other Christians, was wont on the Wednesday of the beginning of Lent to receive with humble reverence from the hand of her confessor blessed ashes which he, taking from the church, brought with him to sign her. One Lent, therefore, on Ash Wednesday, her confessor coming in to her, asked her whether she wished him to bring ashes with him from the church. The virgin answered saying, "It may be good that you do so. However God has provided me with ashes." For the angel of the Lord had been with her a little before, and had signed her forehead with ashes. But that her confessor might be assured of this; taking his hand she placed it upon the ashes so that he might touch them, and he found that beyond doubt it was so. Moreover, that he might share in so great a favour, with her permission he brought his forehead in touch with hers. The angel of the Lord also taught her that those who receive the holy ashes should receive them with a light and a cross—to wit, a burning candle with the cross on the penny brought to the altar—as a sign that they offered themselves with the light of faith by true subjection and mortification to God.

CHAPTER XIX

OF THE WINE MIRACULOUSLY PLACED IN HER CUP

A certain poor woman afflicted with the falling sickness was begging a drink from door to door. And when from horror of her infirmity all avoided her and shut their doors, the virgin, compassionate and shunning no one in misery, learning of her sad case, gave word that the beggar, who was near her house, should be called to her and brought in. Coming in then to the virgin, she begged the alms of a drink. Then the sick virgin, pitying the poor beggar, since she had nothing better at hand to give her, bade her take the cup of wine standing on a shelf and drink it. "Take that cup, child," she said, "and drink what wine is in it." And when, having emptied this, the thirsty woman asked for still more, the virgin answered that she knew not what other drink there would be in the house. But that she might not go away sad and unsatisfied, she gave her a penny to buy a drink therewith at a tavern. After this, as evening drew on, the virgin's lips became parched with thirst. She therefore asked her father, who was living at that time, to hand her a little wine to refresh the dryness of her thirst. He answered, "Certainly," and taking the aforesaid cup to fulfil his daughter's request, at once he spilled over himself the wine which by God's will had been placed therein. And so for the little which she had graciously given to the poor woman in her need, she received from God wine of a much better sort and in greater quantity. And when the father told his daughter this, she in wonder gave thanks to God from her heart. And this wine was red and so well tempered, that it was not necessary to mingle water with it, as she was wont to do with the other. And this wine lasted from the feast of St. Remigius until the feast of the Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. At

which time she received a visit from a certain good matron named Catherine Simons, who was accustomed from a special devotion to supply her with wine. She, not knowing the mystery of the wine given by God, wishing to provide some better and fresh, as thinking this wine spoilt from being there too long, poured it all out, and thus she no longer enjoyed that heavenly favour. Nevertheless the virgin told her friend, the aforementioned Catherine, before she poured out the wine, that this wine was quite suitable and sufficient for her, and that she had never tasted the like before. This sign of grace was wrought for her in the year of the Lord one thousand and four hundred and twelve, while she still drank half a pint of wine a week.

CHAPTER XX

OF THE MONEY PAID FOR HER BROTHER AND MULTIPLIED IN HER PURSE

After this, in the year of the Lord 1423, the brother of this virgin, William Peters, died, and he left after him certain debts which his children could not pay. When the most compassionate virgin learnt this, having sold the jewelry left her by her mother's legacy, she amassed a sum of eight Holland pounds, which she had changed into pieces of one coin which she knew better, and placed in a purse by her side. One day, therefore, towards evening she called Nicholas her kinsman who was dwelling with her, and sent by his hand to pay her brother's debts to all his creditors, where she knew that they lived. Having therefore paid all the debts which she knew were due, she told Nicholas to look into the purse, if anything had remained in it. Who answered, that most certainly much money was left in it. At once she bade him count the same. And when he had counted, he said that he found the first eight pounds, and that there was something over. Then she forbade him count more, and giving thanks to God for His wonderful gift, she declared that that purse should henceforth be called the purse of Jesus, and that from it what was needful should be given to the poor. From this therefore she distributed freely to the needy, when she had not other money. But if sometimes she had some money either her own or received in alms, she would first give this, but when she had not any other, she gave so generously from this purse of Jesus, that little remained in it. But the mercy of God Almighty provided, that always for the use of the poor all sufficiency abounded therein, as at the word of Elias the cruse of oil failed

not in the widow's house. Sometimes also she handed this money to one of her special friends to be counted, and when he had counted it a second or a third time, he always found that it had increased by three, or four, or five pieces. Having therefore paid her brother's debts from this purse, she distributed more than forty pounds from the same, as she revealed to some of her very familiar friends. And by this miracle God made evidently known, that [even] an accountant might have strong faith in the gifts of God which were wrought in her.

CHAPTER XXI

OF THE HAM GIVEN TO THE POOR, AND MIRACULOUSLY REPLACED BY ANOTHER

When on one occasion the pious and pitiful virgin Lydwine had learnt that some poor people had not eaten meat for a long time because of their want, and as she had not at that moment any flesh meat to give them, she sent to the house of a certain friend, begging him to boil a ham and send it to her. Which he willingly did, and sent. And she divided the meat cooked and prepared into parts, and without delay sent it on to the aforesaid poor whom she knew to be in need. But the almighty and merciful God, Who knows the hearts of all and leaves no good unrewarded, rendered a swift return to the charity of this benefactor even in the present. For entering his house, and looking up by chance to the pieces of meat that were hanging, he saw, which is wonderful to relate, in the place of the ham taken away and sent to the virgin for the refreshment of the poor, another hanging better and finer. Which many hearing, rendered thanks to Almighty God; and thereafter were much more devoted to her, willingly giving whatever white meats the virgin asked of them to feed the poor.

CHAPTER XXII

OF THE MEAT AND PEAS GIVEN TO THE POOR, AND MULTIPLIED

It likewise happened once in autumn that the virgin had a quarter of a heifer, which she had bought, salted in the fourth part of a barrel, and also., half a certain measure of peas she procured for the need of the poor, wishing with these to succour during the winter some poor people who lived at home. When therefore she had sent of the aforesaid meat to nearly thirty-six poor families, her messenger returning to her, said that he had distributed as much as he had first salted in the vessel, and that it was still diminished but little. In a like manner he had done with the peas; which also seemed to be very little lessened. Hearing which, the virgin considering the great goodness of God, and giving thanks to her heavenly Provider, said to the messenger: “O how great is the power of our Lord God, O how willingly we ought to give alms to the poor!” And of the aforesaid meat and peas ate also all who were in her house. So much had God blessed the above food, that when Easter was over about a half thereof remained. And all the winter she bade them prepare and cook a great pot of peas once or twice a week, and to give thereof to the poor with the aforesaid meat; imitating the example of Eliseus the prophet, who gave word that a pottage should be made ready for the sons of the prophets in a pot. And seldom did she send aught of this to anyone, but she added a coin small or great; if however she could have one. But neither did she give bread, without adding above some dish to be taken with the bread, or money to buy some condiment for the food. And not only the poor, but the rich also when they besought, she succoured from charity with her alms. It would be too long to recite each

instance of what with unstinted hand, as she was able to possess, she gave to the sick, the weak, to men, and to women in childbirth.

CHAPTER XXIII

OF THE VISION OF A HEAVENLY TABLE FILLED BY THE ALMS OF THE POOR

And how pleasing to God were the alms of this virgin was revealed to her in ecstasy by a certain heavenly vision. Whence when she was rapt into Paradise she often saw first tables set, and covered with cloths of green silk, then her alms as if set by the citizens of heaven placed upon the same, never however lessened at all, but rather increased. But the liquor which she was wont to give in stone jars, she saw there presented in transparent vases as it were of crystal, and the dried fish given for her departed niece Petronilla likewise set. She saw also a glorious gathering of the blessed, all in their rank in different grades, approach the table in due time as if to take refreshment; and the priests holding aloft chalices, and the rest according to their dignity bearing befitting escutcheons, and herself also sometimes assist, and serve, or sit down with the guests; and drink given to them that were seated and to herself, and all filled with unspeakable joy and gladness, over such great charity shown them by her. If ever on those tables she saw nothing of her own almsgiving represented, she was greatly ashamed, as if all had brought their respective portions, but she herself had contributed nothing. Whence both for the sake of increasing the glory of almsgiving, and because of the confusion suffered, she made haste afterwards to add to her alms. Sometimes, however, the angel her guide led her to a certain cell apart and spacious, in which he served her her refreshment. This refection, even if she felt it to be ineffable, nevertheless as much as she was able to describe it, she said was a certain heavenly and divine light, whereby she

was divinely refreshed and inebriated. Sometimes also by prayers she obtained of the angel that she might take one of those who were familiar and dear to her to taste these things; and although seeing in their sleep, they felt that something of the kind was happening to them, nevertheless it was in a very different and inferior manner than befell herself.

Here endeth the First Part of the Book.

PART II

PROLOGUE TO THE SECOND PART OF THE LIFE OF THE SAME VIRGIN

Having spoken briefly of the many diseases and sufferings of this virgin, and also of the gracious works of her mercy and of certain miraculous deeds to the praise of God Almighty; now also in due course of her spiritual gifts and divine consolations and frequent raptures, somewhat must be said and humbly related to the edification of the religious.

CHAPTER I

OF THE BEGINNING OF HER SPIRITUAL CONSOLATIONS THROUGH THE RECOLLECTION OF THE LORD'S PASSION

As of old through the mouth of the holy prophets God spoke His secrets to the comfort of His elect, so now also He speaks to them by the writings of the learned, and the examples of the good, lest perchance troubled, by the divers tribulations of the world, or torn by scourges, they fall away from the hope and expectation of the joys to come. For holy David, to whom God revealed the hidden things of His wisdom (Ps. 18), says that he frequently received the consolations of God amid many adversities. "According to the multitude of my sorrows in my heart," he saith: "Thy consolations have given joy to my soul" (Ps. xciii 19). This sentence of Scripture God truly and manifestly fulfilled to the letter in this holy virgin, whom first He cleansed, inebriating by divers pains and bitternesses; but afterwards, amidst the bruises of many wounds visiting her, He poured in manifold consolations and rejoiced her. To repeat therefore something of what has been already said, after the first three or about four years from the beginning of her malady the virgin Lydwine was still impatient of the divine discipline, and not yet freely submissive to God, by Whom however nothing is clone upon earth without cause; and when she saw her companions visiting her healthy and glad, and herself grievously sick, she desired rather health of body with the rest, than blessedness of soul through the virtue of patience. And because she did not yet savour spiritual things, and knew not what was more acceptable to God, therefore sometimes she

complained, and grieved much over her pains, and wept so very bitterly, that she would accept comfort from no one. Going in to her, therefore, Master John Pot her confessor, who was wont to communicate her twice a year, strove to induce her by his words of consolation to moderate somewhat these tears and set a measure to her grief. Whence he persuaded her by a gentle exhortation to give and conform herself to the divine will, and to exercise herself in meditating upon the Lord's Passion, promising that by the means and aid thereof she would easily receive good consolation. Asking therefore the manner of this holy exercise, and having received from the priest the method of wholesome meditation, when she was desirous of exercising herself therein according to the formula given her, and did not immediately discover thence honey flowing from the rock, nor taste therein the bread of the prophet: overcome by weariness she soon cast aside as bitter absinthe that which she had received in her heart without fixedly rooting it therein. But when the same priest further insisted and urged her most strongly to do violence to herself and persevere in her beginnings, and overcome her distaste by a pious struggle, she, instructed by this excellent advice, easily yielded assent to the counsel of her priest. And at length the good habit of meditating upon God, gained by violence, brought her in due course of time such sweetness with the aid of heavenly grace, that denying herself perfectly she freely used to say, that if it were possible to recover the full health of her body by one Hail Mary, nevertheless she would not do it or desire it. Truly this was a change of the right hand of the Most High (Ps. lxxvi II); Who opened His hand to the needy (Prov. xxxi 20), and comforted her in her long languishing by nights on the bed of her sorrow. For drawn and enticed by the hidden sweetness of the Lord's Passion, day and night at fixed intervals she used to turn over in thought the history of the same most sacred Passion divided into seven parts, according to the number of the Seven Canonical Hours; and finding therein a hidden manna, she was filled with the joy of such sweetness, that now not herself but Christ, Whose Passion she contemplated, seemed to endure what she had hitherto appeared to suffer in the body. Then taught of the Spirit by experience, she could fully say with Isaias, "Verily Thou art a hidden God" (Is. xlv 15). And again exclaim: "My soul hath desired Thee in the night; yea, and with my spirit within me in the morning early I will watch to Thee" (Is. xxvi 9).

CHAPTER II

OF HER RAPTURE INTO THE HOLY LAND, AND TO THE SACRED PLACES OF THE CITY OF ROME

While then the sick virgin earnestly occupied herself every day in exercises of the Lord's Passion, sometimes she was rapt by a holy angel to the places of the Holy Land in which Our Saviour by His birth, life, and suffering wrought the mysteries of man's redemption. When therefore on Mount Calvary, where the Lord was crucified, or at the other holy places, she was admitted to kiss the Lord's cross or His wounds; and for the refreshment of her tribulations sucked honey out of the rock, and oil from the hardest stone, and attained to the embrace of the transfixed feet, and to the expiring of her Spouse crucified for love, then also after the example of Him Whom she sought and loved, she commended her spirit into His hands. And although she often passed from the wounds of the flesh to penetrate the abysmal openings of the divinity through the rapture of contemplation, so that for the abundance of spiritual graces and sweetness she ceased to feel the sufferings of the body, nevertheless she was sometimes afflicted by such great fresh maladies, that even returning from those sweet kisses of the Lord's cross and His wounds she brought back certain ulcers imprinted upon the lips of her mouth. Which indeed by the ordinance of God was wrought, so that not only according to the multitude of sorrows in her heart the divine consolations should rejoice her soul within, but that also, according to the multitude of the divine consolations, her tribulations and afflictions suddenly arising should sadden and humble her without; that thereby openly and frequently tried she might know by contrary vicissitudes

what things she had received from God, and what she had of herself. Then finally the angel said to her: “These ulcers thou hast therefore received in thy body, that thou mayest know that thou art rapt also in the body.”

Another time likewise, when she was passing through the aforesaid most happy regions, and for the slipperiness of the path could not keep her footing, she said that she felt in the body a certain fall on the right foot, and that she suffered pain from that fall and from the sprain of the same foot. For from that injury she contracted such a swelling and blackening and pain in her ankle, that even for several days she was tormented thereby.

In a like manner she was once rapt to the sacred places of the city of Rome. And while she was going between some of the chief churches, and was proceeding with outstretched arms between shrubs and thorn bushes, from the same bushes she received a thorn in her fingers and brought it back with her, from the pain of which, as from the other maladies, she suffered not a little for nearly two days. On account of these bodily injuries then which thus she brought back, she was wont to say, according to the word of the angel, that she thought she had been rapt in the body also. But how these bodily raptures took place, the angel himself knew who conducted her and bore witness thereof.

At times our Saviour Jesus Christ, surrounded by the heavenly hosts, entering her cell as a king with his princes, set Himself at table, and seated in order around her bed, they most fully refreshed her with heavenly meats. And what wonder if she needed not bodily food, who was now nourished with the angels on heavenly dishes, as the Saviour Himself answered the devil tempting Him over bread : “It is written, not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God” (Matt. iv 4).

CHAPTER III

OF THE WONDERFUL BRIGHTNESS AND SWEETNESS APPEARING IN HER CELL

Apart from her mental illumination, over which great men of letters and religious, versed in spiritual studies, who often spoke with her, and not understanding it wondered exceedingly, very often by day and night when she was visited by the angel, or returned from the contemplation of the things above, she was discovered by her companions to be surrounded by so great a divine brightness, that, seeing the splendour, struck with exceeding fear, they dared not approach nigh to her. And although she always lay in darkness, and material light was unbearable to her eyes, nevertheless the divine light was very agreeable to her, whereby her cell was often so wondrously flooded by night, that to the beholders the cell itself appeared full of material lamps or fires. Nor is it strange if she overflowed even in the body with divine brightness, who, according to the expression of blessed Paul, beholding the glory of the Lord with open face, was daily transformed into the same image from brightness to brightness as by the spirit of the Lord (2 Cor. iii 18). And not only was she wont to be surrounded by divine brightness, but with a wondrous sweetness also both herself and her cell were found to be redolent, so that those who entered thought that divers aromatic simples had been brought in and scattered there. And this wonderful sweetness was perceived when she was visited or touched by the Saviour or by the angel, or when she returned from Heaven or the regions of Paradise. Which most sweet odour indeed not only breathed upon the scent through the nostrils, but redounded also on the taste

of those who perceived it; and as strong a taste was felt upon the tongue, and bit the palate, as if they had eaten pepper or cinnamon. Chiefly, however, from the hand a fragrance of wondrous sweetness went forth when she had been led thereby by the holy angel to the joys above and thence brought back.

CHAPTER IV

OF THE VISION ON CHRISTMAS NIGHT, AND THE ABUNDANCE OF MILK IN HER BREASTS

A certain widow of good repute, by name Catherine, for some time dwelt in the house of this virgin. To her once before the nativity of Christ, it was made known by a vision concerning this virgin that on the Christmas night then at hand the breasts of this virgin would be filled with milk, and that Catherine herself was to take the same milk. When therefore the aforesaid widow had recounted this to the virgin, she from humility strove in a certain way to deny her words. At once the widow reproached the virgin that she should dare deny what had been revealed to her by an angel. Then the virgin, constrained by the widow's words, bade her prepare herself to share in this grace. When therefore she had devoutly prepared herself thereunto, according to the virgin's warning, she was not defrauded of her desire promised her by Heaven. For lo! on the night itself of the most sacred birth of the Lord, the virgin Lydwine, rapt in spirit, saw an innumerable multitude of maidens, at the head of whom as queen and mistress stood and presided the most holy mother of God, the ever Virgin Mary, among whom also she saw herself admitted in the choir of virgins to celebrate with joy the birth of Christ. By these virgins stood also a multitude of holy angels, as most noble clients and comrades, offering devout service to their friends, the virgins resplendent in the virtue of chastity. When therefore the hour of the Lord's birth arrived wherein the child-bearing Virgin brought forth the Christ, the breasts of all those virgins, and likewise of this virgin, were seen to swell for abundance of milk, and to have as much milk as the Blessed

Virgin received in her virginal breasts to suckle Our Saviour when she had brought forth Christ into the light of the world. Therefore, after the manner of the Blessed Virgin, the breasts of all the others seemed to be filled with milk, as a sign that all those virgins were fit and worthy to suckle the Lord. But there was, as the virgin herself testified, so unspeakable a glory there, such as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered the heart of man to conceive, so that all could not be expressed by the tongue or written by letters. Meanwhile the widow, mindful of the aforesaid promise, comes in to the virgin, who, drawing her paps with her hand, abounded with such a flow of milk that the widow was satiated with a triple application of her lips, and for many days she remained without any desire to eat. And if the virgin had not bidden her, she would willingly have foregone bodily food. After this also she received the same grace and vision through contemplation two or three other years in her sacred breasts; but because at the hour assigned no one was present to witness it, therefore no one tasted of the grace offered. Praised then be Christ born of a Virgin, Who, to strengthen the faith of believers by works, made manifest in our days certain stupendous miracles in this ailing maiden.

CHAPTER V

OF THE CYPRESS ROD WHICH AN ANGEL BROUGHT HER FROM PARADISE

This virgin in the time of her sickness had a certain light twig with which to open or close the curtain of her bed, wherewith also she was wont to knock in case of need and call one of the household. It happened, therefore, on the occasion of the burning of the city, that many things were piled up round her bed on account of the threatening danger; and thus by the carrying out and the bringing back of things this rod also was lost, but where it was the virgin knew not. Afterwards, however, on the night of St. Apollinaris, bishop and martyr, when the virgin for the intensity of the heat could scarcely draw her breath, she sought the rod to open the curtain, and found it not. Distressed therefore, she grieved much hereat, for she could not help herself; and there was no one else at hand to aid her. At once then the angel of the Lord appearing consoles her in her sadness, promising to restore another and a better rod. And without delay, the pain of her fever ceasing shortly after, the angel as she felt gently placed a stick about four feet long upon her breast and retired. And taking it with outstretched hand, in a certain sense she thought little of it; inasmuch as, twisted in appearance and heavy in thickness, it was far from the lightness of the lost rod, nor would it be for her so light and manageable. Murmuring therefore at this, she said silently to herself: "Am I even now well content?" But what should she do, since she was as yet unaware of the virtue of the wood? She then asks Master John, her confessor, to go over to a carpenter, and ask him to shape this stick with a plane to the form of a yard measure. The priest therefore

enters the house of a certain artisan, who of his many tools had scarcely one plane fit for this work, the rest having been already burnt in the city fire. And when he had commenced to shave the wood, and had set his instrument well into it, such an odour of sweetness evaporated therefrom, and within it was bright with so fair a colour after the fashion of wax, that although outwardly it seemed ugly, nevertheless without hesitation he declared that it was cypress. Whereat both wondering, since the priest could not tell the carpenter of what kind was the wood or whence it had come to the virgin, they eagerly seized upon the shavings and other pieces cut off. Then, by the advice of the carpenter, the priest went with the unpolished wood to another better workman, that he might finish it off to a nicer shape. But when between them they remarked in wonder the same concerning the odour and colour of the unknown wood, and for reverence and the strangeness of the thing appropriated the pieces cut off; the priest in astonishment, not suffering the wood to be further lessened, carried it back in haste to the virgin. And when he had asked her whence it had come to her, and of what kind it was, she confessed that she did not know its species; but she told the priest how she had obtained it. Afterwards, however, on the feast of St. Cyriacus, martyr, the angel coming back led her as usual to the gardens of Paradise, and, reproaching her for her little esteem of the rod, very clearly showed its worth and its place and the tree whence he had broken it. Then, coming back to herself, she narrated in order to her confessor what she had learnt of the angel, grieving that she had caused it to be cut down. When therefore the news of this sweet-smelling wood began to be noised abroad, and many were wishful to see and touch it, and because of it the modest virgin suffered many visits, it happened that on account of the touch of a certain man, the aforesaid wood lost the fragrance of its most sweet odour. And thereupon the virgin grieved that it had been shown to another, because of whose contact the heavenly odour evaporated. But she was wont to say that the devil would be chastised by this rod, as she had learnt from the holy angel.

CHAPTER VI

OF THE BEREAVEMENT OF THE HEAVENLY BRIGHTNESS ON ACCOUNT OF ANOTHER HIDING IN HER CELL

On another occasion a kinsman of this virgin, Nicholas by name, went in to visit her with her confessor, and after they had had some conversation the modest virgin made known to them that she would like to be alone in her cell for two or three hours. She asked them therefore to go out for a walk for a time, hoping that in their absence, on account of her interior recollection, she would receive some special grace. But in particular she asked Nicholas not to return before three or four hours. While therefore he did as she requested, the virgin's confessor without her knowledge secretly entered her cell. The virgin therefore, thinking that she was alone in the secret of her chamber, at once began to make herself ready to receive the grace of the heavenly spouse by devout prayers knocking at the inner gates of Heaven. And about half an hour after midday the angel of the Lord came in to her, flying around the place of the bed where the sick maiden lay, but he did not draw nearer to her. The virgin then, seeing that she could not enjoy his gladsome presence, being troubled, wept bitterly. She asked the angel, therefore, whether she had offended the Lord by any fault whereby she had not deserved to enjoy this grace. But he answering, "By no means," said he, "but on account of the presence of him who is secretly seated in thy cell, and strives to examine and experience the grace prepared for thee." Having said this, the angel departed from her. Then the virgin, deprived of so happy a solace, was exceedingly saddened, and began to weep most

bitterly, so that for a time she was not rapt in ecstasy, although she often enjoyed the grace of the angel's visit. Her confessor therefore, hearing her weep thus, rising, told her that he had been present. And learning this, she was the more distressed than if another had been there, because she had so often revealed her life to him, so that without any spying he might believe the divine grace which was wrought in her. When therefore she had recovered from this trouble, and had regained her peace, the loving and compassionate Lord, as He had often done before, so also afterwards raised her in ecstasy above herself. Then was fulfilled in her what is said by the psalmist: "Thou hast turned for me my mourning into joy: Thou has cut my sackcloth, and hast compassed me with gladness" (Psalm xxix 12).

CHAPTER VII

OF HER RAPTURE TO THE REGIONS OF PURGATORY, AND TO THE JOYS OF PARADISE, WHENCE SHE BROUGHT BACK A VEIL GIVEN HER BY THE BLESSED VIRGIN

After this she was rapt by the spirit who bore her to the regions of Purgatory, where, amid others whom she saw in manifold and grievous ways tormented, she saw also the souls of her friends punished, for whose deliverance and relief she afterwards cruelly afflicted herself in the body. When then she had seen with grief these purgatorial regions, and very many places of punishment wherein the souls were tortured according to the diversity of faults, God pitying her, she was led to contemplate the joys of eternal life. There indeed she saw how God Almighty enjoyed His own glory in Himself, according to that “I am the first and the last” (Is. xli 4), and “I will not give my glory to another” (Is. xlii 8); she saw also how the holy martyrs, confessors, prophets, virgins, and other orders of the blessed enjoyed their glory in themselves, and for overflowing delights were mutually transfused into one another. When she had gazed upon these joys, many saints addressing her sweetly comforted her and, exhorting her to patience, spake thus: “What trouble or harm is it to those who are here now, that in the world they suffered many adversities for Christ?” Then the most blessed Virgin Mary approached her in great glory, and kindly addressing her, questioned her, saying: “Why, most dear daughter, hast thou come with head uncovered and unadorned?” Then this virgin replied: “Most dear Lady

Virgin Mary this is the will of the Lord and my God, and thus my conductor brought me here.” After many familiar colloquies then of the Mother of God with this virgin, the time coming wherein she should return to her bodily senses, Christ’s Mother addressed these words to her: “Most dear daughter, do manfully, and let thy heart be strengthened in the bearing of sorrows; because for these things, which thou sufferest now, thou shalt gain wondrous and great glory.” The blessed Virgin also added, saying, “Wouldst thou have a veil upon thy head?” She replied: “I cannot here have a will of my own.” When therefore she had looked to her angel guide, and he, seeing that she resigned her own will, had consented that she should accept; “Receive,” quoth the Blessed Virgin, “this veil upon thy head, which cannot be upon earth save for seven hours. Give it also into the hands of thy confessor; and tell him that I require of him to believe the gifts of the almighty Son of God, and to place this veil upon the head of my image which is in the church.” After this had taken place, the godly virgin returned to her bodily senses, exultantly giving thanks to God for a consolation so joyful. But she was not aware that she had received such a veil materially; until at length, by the impulse of chance or necessity, placing her hand on her head she drew down a flower-bearing veil; which from its most sweet odour she recognised as placed on her by the hand of the Blessed Virgin, and almost until the seventh hour of her return she kept it by her. Now this veil was of a yellow or golden colour, and of a texture hitherto unseen by mortal eyes; and it sent forth from itself an odour of wondrous sweetness, and therefore as long as she could she retained so beautiful and resplendent a veil by her. And so before the seventh hour she bade them rouse her confessor, and bring him to her speedily, having some secret things to relate to him. Who coming, asked her what she desired. To whom the virgin answered, that she had been present at a certain feast, and that the Blessed Virgin Mary had given her this veil, to bring to earth and place in his hands; that thereby he might believe the gifts of God, and by order of the Blessed Virgin receive this veil into his hands; and in the morning enter the Church which about that time had been burnt, and place it upon the head of the image of the Blessed Virgin Mary. And when the confessor asked how he could enter the church, since it was not yet day, and the church would be closed, she answered him: “Going quickly, ask the sacristan to open the church for thee; for the time presses wherein this veil must be carried back

thence whence I brought it down.” Then he: “How shall I place the veil upon the head of the statue, which is set in so high a position?” The virgin answered: “In the great choir and in such a place you will find a ladder; taking it, go up and place the veil on the head of the statue of the Blessed Virgin.” Then he, after receiving this sign, going out, asked the sacristan to rise quickly and open the church. Which when he had willingly done, the virgin’s confessor finding the ladder in the place which she had indicated to him, took it with him to the statue and mounted. To whom the sacristan: “What do you want there?” The priest replied: “What I do thou canst not know now; but the Lord will grant that thou wilt know it hereafter.” Taking little heed of this answer, the sacristan, because he was not aware of the mystery, at once departed. But the devout confessor fulfilled the virgin’s desire; and having placed the veil on the head of the sacred image, he carried back the ladder to its former position. When therefore he had prayed on bended knees before the statue, and reverently adored, and had fulfilled everything that had been commanded him, before he went forth from the church an angel of the Lord carried back the same flower-bearing veil to its own place, whence the virgin had first brought it down: as she afterwards related to the afore-named widow Catherine.

CHAPTER VIII

OF THE GLORIOUS CROWN PREPARED FOR HER, BECAUSE OF THE INSULTS AND WOUNDS INFLICTED ON HER BY THE MEN OF PICARDY

Another time also, rapt in the spirit, she saw a crown exceeding glorious prepared for her, which she was to receive from the Lord after the toils and sorrows of the present life, wherein nevertheless there still seemed to be many things wanting. Coming back to herself therefore, mindful of the crown foreshown her, she begged the Lord with much urgency that in His compassion He would deign so to work with her that that crown might be perfectly completed. At the same time also she asked of the Lord, that in order to follow in His footsteps He would bring her to Himself, and after this union cast her forth with kicks. While she was constantly and most earnestly making this prayer, it happened in the year of the Lord 1425 that Philip, Duke of Burgundy, entered Holland with a large army of men from Picardy and other soldiers, to force the states to accept him as the master and ruler of the country. When therefore the most mighty duke had been received with honour in many cities, he came at length, about the feast of the holy martyrs Gereon and Victor, to the town of Schiedam, where he was received in like fashion by the citizens. After the refreshment of dinner, therefore, some, as it said, doctors and surgeons of the household of the aforesaid duke, approached Master John Angels the Curé of the Church and asked him to take them to the house of this virgin. Who, suspecting no ill of them, consented to their request. When then he had entered with them to the virgin, there followed a large body of their retainers, who behaved

riotously; and as he strove to quell their uproar lest they should disturb the servant of God, they, throwing him aside angrily, bade him take himself off, uttering disgraceful words concerning his relations with her. The Curé therefore remained in her chamber standing near the altar, very sad and ashamed. Those perverse men, however, when they saw that she was lying in darkness, took away the curtain, lit a candle, and taking off the coverlet wherewith the dropsical virgin was covered, entirely stripped the holy maid, alas! revering neither God, nor the angels, nor the presence of men. This when the daughter of her brother, Petronilla, a young girl devoted to the service of the virgin, beheld, she bore it most ill; and on fire with the zeal of God, bravely threw herself upon them, striving to protect the virgin's modesty. For she deemed it unbeseeming that the eyes of carnal men should behold naked the hidden gem of Christ. Then those wicked retainers, forgetful of decency, roughly seize upon this child, and casting her from them, violently dash her against the foot of the altar: so much so that most cruelly wounded on the thigh she was lame until death. Yea, and not satisfied with these evil deeds of violence, they hasten to others more grievous and criminal. For the holy and inviolate maid they dared to call a prostitute, they gabbled that she who lived abstemious and without food indulged in banquets by night, and one of them who held the light called her a beast, whom beyond doubt her angel guardian often carried off and led to Paradise. Amid these so many and outrageous words uttered by these impious men, they add disgraceful deeds, which the eyes of men would shudder to behold. For, casting off all shame, with their foul hands plucking and pinching the maiden feeble and greatly swollen in the skin on account of her dropsy, they wounded her in three places, from which the blood flowed so freely that it was necessary to drain off the fresh blood from the bed with a bowl. And after they had shamelessly committed this crime, going out they washed their hands of the blood which they had shed; and coming back, instead of the words for forgiveness which they should have implored, they again loosed their accursed tongues unto words of outrage. And thus was accomplished in this virgin what the Lord said to the disciples: "If they have persecuted Me they will also persecute you, and if they have called the good man of the house Beelzebub, how much more them of his household?" (Jo. xv 20; Matt. x 25). Then the virgin, lying as an innocent sheep upon her bed, bathed in her own blood, ready for the

slaughter, patiently accepted all this for Christ's sake, and to them that insulted and wounded her she meekly answered with these words: "Why have you not fear to interpret the works of the Godhead in me so evilly; ye who know not what kind of judgment shall be yours from God?" The duke departing the same hour, those invaders also follow. But the magistrates of the city, hearing that such enormous injuries had been done to the virgin, as if for comfort of the ill done, threatened that they would lodge a complaint with the duke, that he might exercise just vengeance against the authors of so great a crime. Then the virgin, mild and patient in adversity, mindful of the word of the Lord, "Revenge to Me, I will repay" (Rom. xii iv), absolutely forbade them to wreak human vengeance, for God will speedily avenge this wrong. Which by the divine will quickly came to pass, for they all died in different parts the same winter. For one of them, who had held the light and had uttered insults against the virgin, going on board in the harbour by Rotterdam, driven as by a violent wind from one part of the ship to another, was drowned by the prince of darkness and drawn out dead with a broken neck: he was buried in the cemetery. The second going mad near Zerix, lest he should injure those who were with him was thrown from the ship into a skiff, and, taken out dead, was buried in the city. The third, a soldier, perished wounded in battle. The fourth, who called himself a doctor, attacked by apoplexy at Slusa, became dumb. Whereupon, reminded by his servant of what he had done with others against the virgin, and asked whether he was sorry for the same, showing some sign of repentance to his questioner by touch of the hand and movements of the mouth, he died. And his servant coming afterwards to the virgin, with tears besought and obtained forgiveness for his master. The holy virgin therefore wept long over these injuries, not grieving for her wounds, but for their perdition and the crimes committed. And while the magistrates of the city stood near her, the virgin foretelling the future said to them, "I indeed have now suffered these things, but a judgment threatens you of which you are unaware." And not long after when some of them, charged as betrayers of the city, feared to be punished by the duke with death, they said: "Lo this is the judgment which Lydia foretold would befall us." After this the holy angel of the Lord, appearing to her and calling her sister, made known, that by the shameless violence done her by the men of Picardy she had been set in the footsteps of the Saviour as she had before besought, and by the outrageous words which

she had heard from them, the jewels which remained were now completely finished in her crown.

CHAPTER IX

OF THE PATIENCE AND DEATH OF PETRONILLA, THIS VIRGIN'S NIECE

It is now befitting to relate something also of the maiden Petronilla, this holy virgin's niece. This young maid then of seventeen years of age was the daughter of the virgin Lydia's brother, a lover and guardian of perpetual chastity, taking care of her aunt day and night in the so grievous trouble of a long sickness. In the flesh a relative, in the spirit a sister, by service a handmaiden, she chose to serve the virgin as a virgin, and with chaste attentions to soothe most lovingly the pains of the sufferer. In the persecution of the men of Picardy, who most grievously wounded holy Lydia, the virgin pleasing to God, thereby to be crowned with more ample glory, with all her strength, as was said above, she set herself for the defence of her ailing aunt, that they might not harm the innocent one. For she grieved exceedingly with her who was injured, and hearing many grievous insults and threats, received and endured bodily wounds also from the men of Picardy, so that after ailing a long time she died of her injury. A few days before her death Lydia, set in great tribulation and from persecution rendered more fervent towards God, had the following vision, a true presage of what was to come. For on a certain night being in an ecstasy she saw a solemn procession of the heavenly citizens, wherein they each proceeded in distinct orders, to wit, the patriarchs together, the prophets together, the apostles with the apostles, but also the martyrs, confessors and virgins, and priests and clerics each shone in the rank and dignity of his state. And they proceeded from the church of the town of Schiedam, preceded as usual by crosses and lights burning more brightly than the sun, and they came to the door of her house, from which taking a coffin they

bore it to the church. And the virgin herself followed the bier with crowns which had been given her, of which she bore one on her head, the others one in each hand. Coming back to herself therefore, she suspected that her own death was foreshadowed by this vision, but at length she said that it signified the death of her niece Petronilla. Whereupon the virgin of Christ, fearful concerning the passing away of her niece, urgently besought the Lord that He would so order her fevers that she might be able to speak to Petronilla for her comfort before her departure, for she loved her exceedingly with a sincere love. And the Lord, hearing her prayers and groanings and in pity for the one who was about to die, forestalled the time of the daily fever by the space of about six hours, to the surprise of many who were there, and thus the heat of the fever being cooled, she recovered power to speak with and console Petronilla, who was shortly to pass from the struggle of this world to Christ. Having received then divine comfort from the holy virgin, the maid Petronilla, after being often tried in anguish, as she was the companion of the sufferings of Lydia in life, so also she merited to be the sharer of her comfort in death. Therefore after the vision shown before, and having gratefully received consolation from her most dear aunt, the devout virgin of Christ, Petronilla departed to enter the heavenly court, in the year of the Lord one thousand four hundred and twenty-six, on the nineteenth of the Kalends of February, the feast of St. Pontianus, martyr.

CHAPTER X

OF THE WITHDRAWAL OF DIVINE CONSOLATION, WHICH THE VIRGIN SUFFERED ON ACCOUNT OF HER GRIEF FOR HER DEAD NIECE

After the death then of the most chaste dove the maiden Petronilla, the holy virgin Lydwine herself, bereaved of the companionship of so faithful and necessary a helpmate, fell into a hurtful sadness, grieving too much for the loss of her most cordial lover Petronilla, with whom bound by mutual love, she had kept a compact of inviolable chastity. For, loving one another in the love of Christ, they lived together in such union and peace that they could not be separated from one another without grievous sorrow. Which fond union indeed, exceeding the bounds of discretion, was even so displeasing to the Lord that, in vengeance for this undue sadness, the grief-stricken virgin was left without divine consolation until the feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. She wept therefore most bitterly, not only for the death of her lost niece, but more for the bereavement of her wonted grace withdrawn from her on account of the want of measure in her grief. And so to those who asked the cause of these tears, she answered her friends: "Why should I not weep, most dear ones? Lo! now for the last eleven years have asked nothing of the Lord, but I have been able easily to obtain it; but now in suspense for so long a time, I receive no consolation at all, by a secret and righteous judgment of God given forth against me." O terrible and unsearchable dispensation of God over the sons of men! Who turneth the sea into dry land and rose blossoms into absinthe, and from the right setteth on the left, humbling the exalted even to the earth. If, then, the Lord

afflicted a virgin so tenderly loved by Him because she bewailed too intensely the lost presence of her faithful niece, how severely are those to be punished who foolishly lament for carnal friends and worldly companions. However, the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation was not unmindful of the tears of His servant Whom He had chosen from eternity, but after most bitter sorrow He restored to her the most sweet comfort of the Holy Ghost so often tasted in the times past. Therefore the virgin, desolate for a time and chastised by her Father, about the feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Mary, Virgin, received a wondrous and superabundant consolation of divine grace, continuing for nine or almost ten days in constant contemplation and savour of things divine and exultation of mind; and with such great sweetness was she bathed within that those who visited her marvelled, and perceived the scent of a most sweet odour without. When then they questioned whence came an odour of such sweetness, she, desirous out of humility rather to be silent than to reveal the secret, at length overcome by their importunate prayers because the Lord had made this known outwardly by manifest signs, answered that the grace of so inestimable an odour came from the heavenly courts, which grace, as she had merited habitually of old, so now also having been visited afresh, she brought back with her. In a like manner a few years before, at the death of her brother William Peters, she fell into a great sadness and became so heavy with grief that she said she had not known hitherto that she was still so human. Wherefore also a long time she was bereaved of her wonted nourishment of divine consolation, as was revealed to a certain devout solitary in the country of Egypt who had bravely entered the desert by her advice. Of whose holy life, well commenced and happily consummated, is narrated in the following chapter that which may give joy to hear.

CHAPTER XI

OF THE DEVOUT YOUTH GERARD, WHO HAD BECOME A HERMIT, AND OF THE PILGRIMS WHO VISITED HIM

There was a certain youth, by name Gerard, a native of the diocese of Cologne, urged by the desire of a solitary life. Hearing the repute of this holy virgin, he resolved to come to her first to unfold to her in person his purpose, and commend to her prayers the difficult path which he was about to enter, that by the aid of divine grace he might accomplish with saving perseverance the resolution which he had conceived in his mind. And coming to her, he made known to her the secrets of his heart. And she, piously rejoicing in his purpose, with prophetic spirit foretold that for the first three days of his entry into the wilderness he should suffer want, and then, urging him to constancy, she foretold that after the end of the third day he should receive refreshment from God. Which indeed afterwards came to pass in order. For on the evening of the third day he received a heavenly manna, God taking pity upon his toilsome way. But the three days foretold him by the virgin he went through with such constancy that he was ready, on account of her promise, to pass them even with danger of his life. After mutual conference then and recommendation in prayer and the compact of fraternal charity, the new recruit, entering upon the wars of a new combat, went forth from the presence of the virgin wisely instructed, henceforth never again to see his country and kinsfolk. Having wandered therefore through the northern parts, he enters upper Egypt, and, penetrating its deserts, he finds a cell set in a tree because of the wolves and ferocity of the wild beasts. And he had brought with him two companions, touched by the

grace of the same solitary manner of life, who after a few days spent there returned, alas! to the former things; but Gerard, most constantly persevering in the purpose he had undertaken, with Christ as leader climbed the heights of contemplation. And so after nearly seventeen years passed in this vast solitude, it happened meanwhile that a certain bishop from the country of England came with two companions to visit the places of the Holy Land, and then went on with them to see the relics of St. Catherine, virgin and martyr, on Mount Sinai. Who, united by like devotion, mindful of the life of the holy fathers in Egypt, entered that land to seek whether perchance they should find any fathers of the hermit life. And when wandering hither and thither they had come even to its upper parts, they find a little cell built in a tree not far from the ground. And knocking at its door, they see in the door opened to them a man of angelic countenance indeed, but of body so stout that he would be deemed as one not mortified in the desert but brought up amid the luxuries of the world. When then they asked whence he lived, he answered that he was nourished by the grace of God alone. For he was wont to gather and eat the heavenly manna, which of old the children of Israel fed upon in the desert, which, coming down upon his cell from above, he took with giving of thanks. They asked also of him whether there were still found other men who lived without human food as also himself, to whom he replied thus: "In the country of Holland, in the city of Schiedam, there is a certain virgin, for many years divinely scourged by divers infirmities, who makes use of no bodily food, who also has arrived at such a height of perfection that she is long ahead of me a hundredfold in holiness of life and sublimity of contemplation. Whence also I much wonder, since I hear nothing of her passing away, what has happened her, because for long I have not seen her on the ladder of contemplation, while formerly we were frequently wont to be rapt together to the heavenly secrets, each on a separate ladder. For she, as by merit of life so also by excellence of contemplation, was wont to rise above me." Then this devout hermit asked the aforesaid pilgrims to visit this virgin in Holland before they returned to their own parts, and from his mouth put her these three questions. First, how many years he had passed in the desert; secondly, of what age he was then when he entered the wilderness; thirdly, what reason had befallen her that for long he had not seen her in the wonted contemplation. After this the pilgrims, much consoled and edified, bidding the hermit farewell, returned

to Holland and Schiedam. Having entered, therefore, an inn of the town, they ask their host to lead them to the virgin's house. And set in her presence, they make known the cause of their coming and the person of the hermit who had sent them, begging that she reply to the questions put her. But she, preferring to lie hidden through humility than openly answer the questions, gave only this response to her questioners, as regards the time of the dwelling of the hermit in the solitude: "How could I know that? It is the Lord who knows." Then they, as reproving her, object, why should she wish to conceal the truth, since they asked these things not of themselves but from the mouth of the hermit. She answered, therefore, that he had passed almost seventeen years in the solitude. To the second, however, she said that he was nineteen years of age when he set out for the desert. To the third also she replied that she, living in the midst of men, was stained in divers ways, but that he, separated from men and living with the angels, kept his purity untouched. "Therefore it is not strange if he excels me in the height of contemplation." It is also said that the hermit assigned the reason of the withdrawal of grace in the virgin that she was wont to grieve too much for the death of her relatives. Which happened at the death of her brother, who had passed away in Schiedam about the same time as the above was related to these pilgrims by the hermit in Egypt. But the same most devout hermit of happy memory, a perfect despiser of earthly things and a sublime contemplator of heavenly secrets, passed away in the year of the Lord's Incarnation, one thousand four hundred and twenty-six, the twelfth day of the month of October. His death and passing to glory were revealed to the holy virgin by a vision. For, rapt into Paradise at the hour of his passing, she saw his soul, freed of the body, borne by angels to Paradise, and washed in a fountain so limpid that she seemed to be able to see its depth for nearly a mile.

CHAPTER XII

OF THE HAPPY DEATH OF MASTER WERMBOLD, PRIEST, THIS VIRGIN'S FAITHFUL FRIEND

Among many devout fathers and men versed in spiritual grace, at Utrecht in the days of the venerable lord bishop Frederick, was a certain priest of chaste life and zealous for souls, by name Wermbold, beloved of God and men, and known far and wide to many religious in the diocese of Utrecht and in the country of Holland. He was a native of a certain town of Holland near Goudam, and for many years he shone as director and confessor of the Sisters of the Third Order at St. Cecily in Utrecht. Who, deeply versed in the divine scriptures, often preached the word of God in the church, and, fervently watching in prayers and devout meditations for the purity of his heart he merited also to be visited from on high by frequent consolations and divine revelations. To the knowledge of this so famous a father, not by human information but by divine revelation, the holy virgin Lydwine, still living in poverty in a poor hut, attained in this manner. For when on the feast of the Lord's Annunciation the aforesaid virgin, having completed barely half her illness, was rapt to contemplate the things of Heaven, it happened also that the most devout priest of Christ, Wermbold, was likewise raised at the same hour to behold heavenly things; and then from having this one and like contemplation, they both commenced divinely that mutual acquaintance which they had not had before. Wherefore the same venerable father, urged by an affection of pious devotion, wished to know also and see with the eyes of the body the servant of God, whom he had known already in the spirit. Coming in, therefore, to her little house where

she lay sick, and beholding her misery wherewith she was burdened, as the Samaritan in the gospel he was moved with compassion towards her, and wounded to the heart with the arrow of pity. And without delay, after holy converse on God, he stretched out his hands to works of charity. And first he gave her about thirty groats of Flanders to buy two linen coverings. Then the priest, set on fire with the spirit of God, entered the church, and, mounting the pulpit, made a discourse to the people, in which with harsh reproaches he chastised them as they deserved for their niggardliness and want of mercy, inasmuch as they did not succour God's ailing creature who was lying in such want and pain. And justly indeed did the eloquent priest speak with severity for the zeal of God, for tried virtue reproves the foolish. Afterwards, however, many moved to mercy by the inspiration of God, with a generous heart bestowed their alms on the holy virgin. This reverend father therefore, among other discourses of charity with the sick virgin, who then had accomplished about a half of her diseases, began to say to her that before Easter a revelation had somehow been made to him as if he were to pass to the Father before this Easter. To whom the virgin replied, that he would have to wait until the next Pentecost, and that again after Easter he should visit her. And how true was this saying the issue of the affair proved. For he died shortly after these words in the year of the Lord 1413, on the vigil of Pentecost, at the twelfth hour of midnight, on the third of the Ides of June, on which day was kept the feast of St. Barnabas, apostle. And being dead, the devout and compassionate father Wermbold was detained from the sight of the glory of the divine countenance for nearly nine days, as was divinely revealed to this virgin. But when this venerable father was speaking with the virgin before his death, paternally consoling her, and when she complained somewhat that she was much burdened by the number of her infirmities, the priest responded, encouraging her to bear more and, as it were, foretelling that it would be necessary for her to embrace still greater endurance, inasmuch as perhaps she had barely fulfilled half the term of her sufferings. And this so befell as he foretold. For he said that she had set in Heaven a foundation very broad and wide, and that the superstructure to be built thereon could not be perfected in a short while. And the virgin lived after the death of this dear father twenty years in the great pains and many sufferings foretold her, whom God

nevertheless consoled and strengthened with frequent raptures by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost and the visit of heavenly citizens.

CHAPTER XIII

OF HER DIVERS RAPTURES AND HER KNOWLEDGE OF THE STATE OF CERTAIN RELIGIOUS

And so this virgin, feeble in body, fervent in spirit, was very often rapt into ecstasy by excess of mind; but in her rapture it was not *rara hora et brevis snora* (rare hour and brief delay). Once a certain religious questioned her concerning her state and patience in her afflictions which she endured daily. To whom she replied that she was burdened very excessively and above her strength, and that, unless the loving Lord supported her with the staff of consolation, she might easily faint away under the weight of her sorrows. For she said that by the influx of the divine mercy almost every night for a long period of one hour or more she was rapt to behold things heavenly, by the delight of which she was so refreshed that all torment, even the most bitter, was rendered for her not only bearable but even pleasant. She was also rapt to the regions of Purgatory and to the tortures of Hell, that, seeing these horrible punishments, she might more easily endure present scourgings, and by interior compassion might willingly do penance for those who needed deliverance. In these and the like blissful raptures, for nearly thirty-four years lying on a bed of pain, she was visited and strengthened in spirit; but at times she was deprived of the divine raptures, as has been said, from certain causes. Finally, in His many dealings by contrary events, God trying her often humiliated her, and frequently visiting her raised her the higher. By occasion therefore of these raptures she knew many churches and monasteries of religious and the arrangement of places and the building of churches; religious persons also, whom she had never

seen, she knew by name, and what divinely befell them she sometimes narrated to others.

She had said once to a certain Prior that she knew his monastery and church just as he did, and that at night while the brethren were sleeping she was wont to visit their dormitory, and that she used to see holy angels standing by the beds of the brethren.

There was a certain youth, Henry by name, born at Hague, a town of the duchy of Holland, whom the virgin had never seen before, who, inspired by the grace of God, without the knowledge of his parents sought and obtained the habit of holy religion in the parts of Brabant near Diest. Whose father, named William, knowing not what had happened his son, came to the virgin perhaps to ask some questions. Who, at once addressed by her in his own name and surname, heard the virgin wishing all prosperity to his son, and rejoicing over the good things done to him by God. Whereupon he, wondering, demanded the reason of these congratulations. And she, adding joyous tidings to his astonishment replied that he had been clothed in the habit of holy religion in the aforesaid monastery.

There was also another religious, born at Dordrecht, but professed as a regular in Eymsteyn, who once entered the virgin's cell silently to visit her, whom she, calling by his own name, very graciously greeted. And although perhaps she had seen him once before, at that moment certainly she did not see him bodily. Whereat also he, being astounded, asked whence she thus knew him, to whom she replying simply said, "The Lord hath granted." Let these two examples be enough for the moment. Brother Hugh, formerly Subprior in Briel, heard them from the mouth of those to whom they personally happened, and he remains as a witness of their truth.

CHAPTER XIV

OF THE APPEARANCE AND KNOWLEDGE OF THE ANGELIC BRIGHTNESS ABOUT HER

Clearly in this most approved virgin was fulfilled that which of old the Lord said to Moses and the children of Israel entering the land of promise. “Behold I will send my angel who will go before thee and keep thee ever, and be the guide of thy way” (Exod. xxiii 20). We read in many books of the saints of the appearance of angels, and now the like can be proved in this lowly virgin Lydia from the testimony of many religious. For she was visited most frequently by a holy angel; by whom also she was touched as worthy of his companionship and trusting in his protection, whom she knew as personally as a friend knows his friend. Likewise she knew also the angels of her confessors, and of others her acquaintance, and of many outsiders. And the same angel appeared to her under different forms: sometimes in the shape of a most beautiful man, always, however, with great brightness, as an angel of light, the minister and standard-bearer of eternal light. Sometimes, however, that brightness was so great that if a thousand suns together shone in their might, yet they would not be able to equal this angelic splendour. At times however he appeared less bright, but always he bore the standard of the Lord’s cross upon his forehead, lest perchance she should be deceived by an angel of Satan, who, transfiguring himself into an angel of light, often appeared to her. If however on account of the frequency of visitors she was sometimes disturbed, or on account of the presence or contact of some unclean persons her purity was stained, lest this slight fault should remain long on the white fleece, or pass unpunished,

she was deprived of the aforesaid angelic visits and divine raptures. Sometimes also she was burdened in her conscience with certain spiritual defects known only to God and the angels : by reason of these scrupulously chastised she was also hindered from her wonted raptures. Whereupon, bruised in the mortar of her heart, she was wont to confess to the holy angel her guide; and thus cleansed by a humble confession, she hastened to follow him as he went before to the places whither he led. She was also taught by the same holy angel what she ought to confess to him and what to her confessor, for she confessed her excesses daily, according to that word of the psalmist: “I said I will confess against myself my injustice to the Lord, and Thou hast forgiven the wickedness of my sin” (Ps. xxxi 5).

CHAPTER XV

OF THE WONDERFUL MANNER OF HER INTERIOR PAIN BEFORE THE RAPTURE OF HER SPIRIT

In that to us indescribable separation of the spirit from the soul, before the holy virgin was rapt out of herself, at first she felt such anguish in the vital parts of the breast and heart that, scarcely able to breathe, she thought she was about to die. But afterwards in these spiritual raptures, accustomed by habit she did not suffer so much pain. When therefore she was rapt in spirit to the aforesaid places, her body remained as dead and soulless upon the bed, so immovable that if anyone had touched it she would not have felt anything. Something similar is read in the life of St. Thomas of Aquin, so that no one should doubt of the truth of the novelty in this virgin, whom God rejoiced by His ineffable raptures.

It happened therefore in a certain rapture, that the angel having taken her hand led her to the altar of the chapel of the Blessed Virgin in the church of Schiedam. And when she had prayed there, devoutly greeting the Blessed Virgin, the angel led her towards the west by pleasant places of roses and lilies, and set with every kind of flowers and covered with spices. Approaching therefore these places, she was invited by the angel to enter but for reverence thereof she dared not enter, lest she should tread the flowery meadows with her feet. At length when the angel assured her that they would not be downtrodden by her, entering according to his counsel and invitation, she followed him whithersoever he went before. But at times those flowers were of such a height and density that she said she could not pass through them; and then the angel carried her over as of old Habacuc

the prophet, so that lifting her he speedily carried her across with confidence through those flowers to the place whither they wended.

CHAPTER XVI

OF HER SPIRIT OF PROPHECY, WHEREBY SHE REVEALED TO OTHERS MANY HIDDEN THINGS

And it is certain that this virgin also knew many secrets concerning both the living and the dead, of which some she made known for the profit and comfort of her friends, but many she humbly kept back in silence. For instance she is believed to have long before foreknown the fire of the city of Schiedam, because before it happened she had ordered a store of planks to be set against the wall of her house. To those who asked why she did this she said, because if the fire broke out then they could more easily, having removed the planks, carry her out and bear her across the moat.

It happened then in the year of the Lord 1428 that certain sailors of Schiedam, before setting out for the fishing, carefully made ready a great supper for their comrades and friends to bid them farewell on the feast of St. Arnulph, bishop and confessor, rejoicing indeed in present prosperity, fearing nothing of the evils to come. When therefore, having finished their supper, they had covered the fire under a vessel near a wall of reed, then lo! about the eleventh hour of the night gradually a fire breaks out, which, raging for the rest of the night, made such way that nearly the whole city with the church and the house of the sisters near the church was burnt. When this had come to pass, very many men of that city held it for certain that this great fire had befallen because of the sins of certain individuals, who amongst other crimes had shown irreverence to the aforesaid image of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Among whom was a woman worldly and unrestrained, following the broad paths of this world with the dissolute.

After whose death a certain priest well known to this virgin asked her to pray for him, that he might have some certain knowledge of the state of the dead woman. And when the virgin agreed and did accordingly, the same priest, in a vision of the night rapt to the infernal regions, saw that the aforesaid woman was held bound with iron chains in hell, which also he related to this virgin with wonder and grief.

CHAPTER XVII

OF A CERTAIN DEPARTED SACRISTAN AND MANY OTHER DEAD

There was a certain sacristan Baldwine by name, in the town formerly called Oudershie, who falling sick died on the night of the Conversion of St. Paul, and whose name this virgin did not know before. But the same night the virgin, absorbed in prayer, rapt as usual from her senses, came to a certain mountain, at the foot of which she saw a man then unknown to her wishing to climb the mount, but for weakness not able. And when according to his request placing him on her shoulders she had carried him up, wondering at his weight she asked by what name he was called. Who answering said, “Baldwine de Velde.” The next morning Master John the virgin’s confessor, entering her cell, found her breathing heavily as from weariness of a great labour and from fatigue scarcely able to draw her breath. The priest therefore asked the cause of this distress and weariness. And she explained in order the thing shown in the vision, and told the name of the man before unknown that he was called Baldwine. Whereat wondering, that priest recalled to mind the sacristan at Oudershie, who was called Baldwine, but his surname he did not know. After two days the same priest came to that town to celebrate, asking a certain woman about the condition and surname of the same sacristan, who gave his surname as it was revealed to the virgin, declaring likewise that he died on the same night on which the virgin had carried him from the foot of the mountain to the top.

Another time also, rapt as usual, she came by a certain mountain and she saw divers persons wandering in different ways, some at the foot of the mount, others struggling higher up, and some standing on a more lofty part

of the mount, wishing indeed to climb the mountain itself but unable and not having either any assistance to aid them. The virgin therefore understood what these things signified, that they were souls of the departed who needed prayers.

And when some of the solemn festivals were at hand, for some days before those feasts she would be rapt to the regions of Purgatory, to see the miseries of the afflicted who needed help and were unable to assist themselves, that she might faithfully pray the Lord for them, who, tormented with most grievous pains, were forced to cry out with Blessed Job, "Have pity on me, have pity on me, at least you my friends, for the hand of the Lord hath touched me" (Job. xix 21). Returning to herself, therefore, when she had willingly borne her daily fevers for their deliverance and most bitterly wept imploring urgently the divine mercy, again in rapture on the feasts themselves she exulted with such great gladness over their redemption, which she learnt, that she could scarcely hold herself in for joy. And although on other days she often liberated great numbers, still on the chief festivals by the favour of God she delivered many more and in greater abundance. But she so bitterly grieved over their sufferings and frequently wept that, natural tears failing in her, tears of blood succeeded, which, congealed in course of time upon her cheeks, her confessor scraped off; softening them with the natural tears that flowed, and placing them in a bag he kept them by him in a casket, and after her death, as she wished, placed in the tomb under her head.

CHAPTER XVIII

OF HER CAUTION AND PRUDENCE CONCERNING THE REVELATION OF THE STATE OF THE DEPARTED

Very cautious and circumspect was this virgin speaking of the state of the departed, although very often she was not unaware of the secrets of God. Which from the following example will appear from her words as a warning for the inexperienced, whom visions of the dead often deceive. After the death then of William Duke and Count of Holland and Zeeland, under whom this virgin flourished and long lay sick, a certain popular rumour was noised and came to the ears of the Countess Margaret, wife of the Duke now dead, that this virgin had said that he was already saved. She had also heard that this virgin had been dead for three days and had come to life again. The noble and venerable lady then sent one of her servants to her, to inquire into the truth of this affair. Being questioned therefore on each point by the messenger sent, she thus replied to the one: "If I had been dead three days the people of Schiedam would long since have buried me." But to the other, as she deemed the question absurd, she replied after a fashion saying: "If he were already in eternal life then the Lord would be doing me a wrong, who, held down for seventeen years by most grievous maladies, have not left my bed or touched the ground. Wherefore I beg that you do not sin by occasion of me." And thus the messenger who came uncertain returned thence more uncertain. However, of several departed religious she sometimes gave certain information, that they were saved and brought into the joy of their Lord. But of the last days and the coming of Antichrist she used to say that she herself would see neither of these.

CHAPTER XIX

OF THE TEMPTATION OF A CERTAIN MAN, DELIVERED BY THE ADVICE OF THE VIRGIN FROM THE SNARE OF THE DEVIL

A certain citizen, an honourable man and a counsellor of the town of Schiedam, was grievously tempted by the devil to cast violent hands upon himself by hanging himself. But he had a priest and a good chaplain, John by name, adorned by the grace of God, who was wont to celebrate Masses before him, and pray for him. As often then as he knew him to be tempted he could scarcely persuade him not to inflict a cruel death upon himself. But since he could not resist the violence of the temptation and his confessor could not keep back the tempted man from the rope, the priest, very anxious because of the danger, came to the virgin for advice and asked what he should do with the tempted man. Then she, knowing that the devil could not bear that the arts of his malice should be turned into arms of salvation, counselled the priest that if the tempted man could not resist the suggestion of the devil he should place upon him as a penance that which the evil enemy suggested for his ruin. Hearing which the confessor, fearing lest he should be the cause of his perdition, did not dare tell the tempted man what he was advised. But she, trusting in God, bade him do it with all confidence in his conscience. When then on one occasion, the priest finding an opportunity, did with the tempted man as the virgin advised, the tempted one gave thanks on bended knees that now at length he merited to obtain what he had so long desired. And at once returning home, fastening a rope to a beam and passing it round his neck he mounted a seat, that being tied

he might hang himself. But, O wondrous clemency of God and unspeakable providence of divine mercy Who turned the snares of the devil unto the deliverance of His servant on account of the obedience of the priest consenting to the advice of the virgin of Christ. The demons therefore, seeing and grudging that he should depart by such a death, violently seizing him with the rope and snatching him away, said, "You shall not hang yourself now." And being furiously enraged they threw him and forced him down behind a chest, between the wall and the chest. And after being much sought for by his servants for the space of nearly three hours, and at length found there to the great astonishment of all, he was drawn out only by the removal of the chest, and thereafter he remained freed from that temptation.

CHAPTER XX

OF A WOMAN FREED BY THE MERITS OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY FROM THE GULF OF DESPAIR

In the city of Schiedam was a certain woman timid and fearful whom the devil had almost cast into the abyss of despair. For he very often put before her during sleep a sheet with a certain sin formerly committed by her, as if not yet forgiven by God nor to be forgiven, although nevertheless she had very often confessed it sacramentally, had received absolution, and had performed the penance enjoined. She often therefore exposed the anguish of her heart to this virgin, and she comforted the desolate soul with loving counsels, and nevertheless did not succeed with her as she would have desired, because the prince of death troubled her as before in sleep with ever fresh terrors, saying: "By no means shalt thou be able to escape my hands, for by these letters I have thee confirmed and subject to me." It happened therefore on one occasion that the virgin, engaged in prayer, rapt to Heaven, saw the demon carrying this very document in his hand, but by the hand of the Blessed Virgin Mary it was violently taken away and snatched from his hand. For the merciful Lady was able to destroy all the machinations of the devil; and to comfort the sad soul with the trust of a good hope. These things afterwards the virgin, restored to her bodily senses, related to her confessor John Walters, showing that the devil's malice was frustrated by the compassion of the Blessed Virgin. After this the aforesaid woman as before laid the complaints of her desolation before the virgin; whom she, gently consoling, without mentioning however the destruction of the paper, bade to be henceforth secure, nor to fear any evil would befall her

thereby. Yea and offering herself a hostage for her conscience on the day of judgment and trusting through all in the divine mercy, she rendered her free and at rest from all the former fear.

CHAPTER XXI

OF HER GRACE OF GREAT COMPUNCTION AND ABUNDANT SHEDDING OF TEARS IN THE COMMUNION OF THE BODY OF CHRIST

Now next something must be said of the state of this most devout virgin, as regards the holy Communion; how by the breathing of divine grace she gradually made progress to higher gifts by frequently receiving the sacraments of the precious body of Christ. At that time therefore of her dryness, when the virgin, as yet unacquainted with spiritual sweetness, lay sick upon a bed of most bitter sorrow, there was a certain devout priest named Master John Pot who was accustomed to communicate with her twice a year, and who first formed her to meditation on the Lord's Passion. He therefore, having a care for the salvation of the sick maiden, when one day he was about to communicate her, taking in his hands the sacred and spotless host he bade her very gravely and feelingly to look upon and receive Him Whom he held in his hand, knowing for certain that He was the Lord God her Creator Who had been made flesh, suffered and died for her, Who would also most abundantly recompense her for every affliction which she bore and would soften every pain. By which words she was at once exceedingly touched, and as it were wounded by certain fiery darts of love. And as before for grief of heart and impatience of feeling she could not cease from many tears, so also now for almost a fortnight or more she could not withhold her weeping for greatness of contrition and divine love. For

she grieved and wept much over the blindness of her past negligence and her continued dullness, in which she had been so long impatient and thoughtless that she could not receive the consolation of her mother or of any man nor tell the cause of her tears to any. Now henceforth, having received the saving sacrament with great contrition, she commenced to be refreshed with frequent divine consolations, although she did not yet go into ecstasy by the rapture of contemplation. And nevertheless she did not wish to make known the reason of her tears to those who questioned her, that she might not lose the hidden manna which she tasted, but might keep it in her heart the more safely by silence. And she enjoyed these consolations by divine dispensation for about eight years before she began to be rapt in ecstasy out of the senses of her body. With these two aids then, to wit, the holy Communion of the body of Christ and devout meditation on the Lord's Passion, as by two loving arms she embraced her beloved spouse Jesus Christ; and therefore she could confidently say with the spouse in the canticle of love, whose grace of ineffable sweetness she frequently felt in herself by experience: "A bundle of myrrh is my beloved to me, He shall abide between my breasts" (Cant. i 12). For as myrrh preserves the bodies of the dead from rottenness, so also the daily exercise of the passion of Christ preserved her mind from impatience and murmur. And as material bread strengthens him who eats, so the receiving of the body of Christ refreshing her spirit brought her life and joy.

CHAPTER XXII

OF HER INSATIABLE DESIRE TO COMMUNICATE OFTEN, AND OF THE APPEARANCE OF A CHILD CRUCIFIED

When our Saviour Jesus Christ was preaching the gospel of the kingdom of Heaven, among many heavenly words which He taught He uttered this most saving word of faith concerning the sacrament of His body. “He that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me” (Jo. vi 58); to wit, eating Me either spiritually only, or also sacramentally and spiritually: or certainly he shall live now in the life of grace, and hereafter in the life of everlasting glory reigning with Me; for this the sacred Communion of My body and blood signifies. Which faithful promise was undoubtedly fulfilled in this virgin, Christ most lovingly working His wonders in her. For although through nearly the first half of the period of her maladies she used very little nourishment and such as could not support nature, as is related in the first part of this book, and moreover although for all the rest of her life she took almost no food or drink at all, nevertheless this holy servant of God could not entirely abstain from this living food and life-giving sacrament of the body of Christ. For as much as she languished by corporal infirmities in the body, and took less bodily food, so much the desire of the heavenly and divine food increased in her, and by means thereof she was strengthened in spirit and lived more spiritually within. Whence in the beginning of her sickness for three or four years she was wont to communicate once a year at the feast of Easter, but afterwards with the beginning of the divine consolation for some years she received Christ twice a year. After that, when her mother was dead, so much did her desire increase, and so much

was she drawn to communicate, that six times or more she received the Lord's body with full faith and special devotion unto the singular solace and assistance of her soul; and she would have received the same more frequently if the Curé of the church had not refused her. Whence also, if sometimes she asked to receive the holy Communion of the body of Christ from him, very grudgingly and against his will he would come to her, over which she grieved much. For the longer she lay in her sickness the more she suffered and languished in the body, and the more she suffered in the body the more she burned in divine love, and the more she was on fire with divine love so much the more the grace of Almighty God worked in her.

After this a certain wondrous vision appeared to the virgin, on fire with the desire of communicating. For a certain visible likeness of a crucified Child with five wounds appeared to her lying in bed, which afterwards changed into a sacramental host with the same wounds hung in the air over the sheet of her bed, wherewith the virgin was in part covered. She sent therefore a messenger to the Curé of the church that he should come to her, and see Christ appearing to her in a host, which also certain others saw with their own eyes. Then she begged him to give her this host in Communion and not to distrust her and the works of God. Hearing this, although doubtful, he gave her the host of the vision, which the virgin begged to receive and received with reverence. After the wondrous appearance of this host and its devout reception the heart of the virgin was inflamed with so great a divine love and desire for holy Communion, that for many years she received the venerable sacrament of the Eucharist every fortnight from the hand of the priest, who also was obliged to use for this great care and foresight, for otherwise she would not have been able to consume it for weakness. Afterwards, however, he would offer her a little water for the ablution, wherein, little as it was, she suffered such difficulty in her throat that she could scarcely swallow it. But sometimes he gave her no ablution, on account of the too great difficulty of receiving it. And this state as regards her communion endured indeed until the year of the Lord 1421. But from this time until her death she commonly suffered her quartan and sometimes daily fevers for the freeing of souls from Purgatory. During which period she burned with so great a divine love that usually, when at the time of the quartan fever she was not suffering a fever attack, she communicated from the hand of her confessor two days following. And this

holy and venerable sacrament of the body of Christ was for the sick virgin, not only the spiritual refreshment of her soul, but also a certain relief and support of her afflicted body. Especially, however, at the time of the withdrawal of grace and bereavement of divine consolation she received this most sacred banquet of the Lord's body more frequently as her singular support. For the interior grace of divine consolation, which she very often felt in abundance of spirit and joy of heart, was to her refreshment of body and soul; and again, by its absence her body was so weakened that without spiritual nourishment she could scarcely subsist and live in the body. Therefore, as has been said, she burningly thirsted for the body of Christ and received it as the support of life, lest she should die of weariness under the burden of suffering in the present pilgrimage. In the receiving of which she was frequently illumined with so great a divine light, that as with the bodily eyes she saw materially, so also, bathed with this supercelestial light, she saw all her interior with the eye of the mind. This same thing also befell her at other times in the presence of the divine light and the rapture of the contemplative life. Whence also afterwards, in the time of her dryness and the withdrawal of consolation, when by divine ordinance she did not experience this illumination, she would say within herself: "O where are now those days in which I was wont to behold my interior with the interior eye, as with the eye of the body I saw bodily things?" And thus was fulfilled in her that saying of the Wise Man: "In the day of good things be not unmindful of evils; and in the day of evils be not unmindful of good things" (Eccl. xi 27).

CHAPTER XXIII

OF THE FEVER OF THE CHILD BALDWINE, AND OF MASTER JOHN HER CONFESSOR

Now the desolate virgin had with her for some comfort in the latter days of her illness the son of her brother, by name Baldwine, a child of twelve years, almost continually waiting upon her. And that he might remember more surely the wondrous things that were wrought in her, and which he beheld by frequent experience, she obtained for him from the Lord the malady of a fever by a wholesome affliction and a certain loving miracle as a reminder of His wonders. For the same young lad used a certain cup from which she was wont to drink. And so about the feast of the birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary, in that year before the day of her death, the virgin when it was now evening bade the same child to place his cup filled with a light liquor near her bed. When morning came, calling the child, she bade him take the cup and drink. When therefore he had taken the cup he found it by the gift of God filled with a certain strange liquor, as if there were in it a concoction made of a mixture of cinnamon and other simples sweet smelling and delicious to the taste. But as this virgin, according to the multitude of afflictions wherewith she was daily scourged, was also refreshed with divine consolations, so on the other hand the aforesaid child, having received and drank as much as he would of the aforesaid cup, on the same day began to languish and to be troubled successively with divers fevers until about the feast of St. Martin, bishop, in the winter time of the same year. But from the same miraculous cup divers men also drank, but they did not however contract any maladies as the aforesaid child. Likewise

also different liquors poured into the same cup for a whole week gave to those who drank the savour of a most sweet potation, without the affliction of any disease. This cup then, which to the child was a sign of scourging, to others who tasted was the solace of a fresh miracle. But when the child was cured of his fevers, the hand of the Lord was again stretched out to the priest of this virgin. For Master John her confessor fell into quartan fever, and on the same day on which the virgin was usually attacked, he also being struck suffered a severe fever. Seeing this, Master John's sister asked the virgin how long the fever of her brother was to last. Who answered that he would be freed about the first Sunday of the following Lent, which also so came to pass as she foretold. And when the same Master John was sick with a serious illness unto death, the virgin, compassionating him, by the great urgency of her prayers mercifully obtained for him from the Lord delay of death and lengthening of life.

CHAPTER XXIV

OF HER SUFFERING FROM STONE AND HER FOREKNOWLEDGE BEFORE THE DAY OF HER DEATH

The Virgin of Christ, Lydwine, after being tried in many pains that there might not remain in her the stain of sin, at length with still another most sharp affliction was stricken and cleansed. In the last year of her life therefore, from the feast of the Purification unto the feast of the following Easter, together with the other maladies which she had before for a very long time, she was afflicted with such a pain of the stone, that two or three times, lying as almost dead for nearly an hour, she could not speak. And she endured this suffering with a most intense toothache without any expression of impatience, and at its barely ceasing she was just able to utter only a very few words. And she said that the same stone, which was about the size of a pigeon's egg, would cause her death.

At that time also she was so seldom visited of God by interior consolations that she complained to Master John her confessor with tears that she was in a certain manner abandoned by the Lord beyond all wont. In which desolation, however, greater merit was added to her by her patience, because she was rendered more like to Christ suffering on the cross, Who with a loud voice called to the Father, saying, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" (Matt. xxvii 46). And this holy virgin, as a true lover and bearer of the cross, persevered and endured her maladies unto death, which also she had foreknown long before by a revelation from the Lord. For when a certain religious Prior called by her had come to her, to wit, on the feast of the Chair of St. Peter the same year in which she died, the next

day very early the same Prior was bidden by Master John the virgin's confessor to enter her cell if he wished to experience any spiritual favour in her regard. When then he had entered her cell he perceived therein such a fragrance of a most sweet odour which the virgin, then visited by the Lord and borne to the heavenly regions, had brought back with her, as if divers aromatic herbs had been scattered in the said cell. After mutual and divine converse then on those things wherefore she had summoned the Prior, she counselled him to return to her at Easter to confer still about these things in the best manner the Lord should grant. But if he should not find her, that then he should in charity pray for her. From which words it is clearly evident that she said this of her death, although she did not express any mention of death.

CHAPTER XXV

OF THE GRACE ON EASTER NIGHT AND THE PROPHECY OF HER DEATH

And when the Easter solemnity arrived, on the holy night itself of the Lord's resurrection about the fourth hour of the breaking dawn, the aforesaid Master John her confessor came to see the virgin, and both from the scent of her hands and from her words he clearly perceived that she had been visited as usual by her holy angel. For he found such a sweetness upon her that she seemed to have been anointed with the oils of different spices. Whereupon, when he gave thanks to the Lord and congratulated her, she, coming back to herself after this visitation, confessed that she had been divinely comforted, but declared that most grievous afflictions were about to befall her, which she would suffer during this festival. She also said that on the same night she had heard the Alleluia sung in the Heavens, and she hoped that she would shortly sing the same canticle Alleluia with the heavenly spirits in greater joy and consolation, and that she would suffer less from those maladies if the Easter festival were over. Which she seems to have said of the passing of her death, although she did not show that she was soon to die. But each day, to wit, on Easterday itself and the two following, she said to those who came to her that the pains which she was then suffering would not last long; as afterwards the issue proved.

CHAPTER XXVI

OF HER HAPPY DEATH AND SUFFERINGS AT THE LAST

Therefore, when the Tuesday within the octave of Easter dawned, the virgin, mild and patient, wishing to recollect herself more fully, asked Master John her confessor, who came to her early, that neither he nor any of those who loved her should enter to visit her that day except the child Baldwine, who carefully waited on her unto death. Which also was done, that according to the desire of her heart she might die in solitude and forsaken of men. For the aforesaid her confessor related to a certain religious that, four or five years before her death, he had heard her asking the Lord, that she might die with none save Himself as witness and not without her own knowledge. And she had likewise begged that He would multiply her pains and infirmities, lessen her days, hasten the hour of death, and render the agony brief; which also came to pass as will shortly appear. All the members of her household then having been dismissed, and in the absence of Master John, who was then saying the Office of the dead for a certain departed mother of the Sisters, the virgin approaching her end in the presence of only the aforesaid child, who held a bowl for her and carried out her vomit, she was so distressed in throwing up this vomit that to the child her attendant pitying her she said: "My most dear child, would that my Master John knew how much I am afflicted now." Nor is it strange if she confessed herself afflicted in these sufferings, when pain coming upon pain increased in her. For from the seventh hour of the same day in the morning, until nearly the fourth hour after midday before she died, she threw up about twenty times a very green matter, which she thought came from the bitterness of the gall. And when the aforesaid child, seeing and

hearing these things, asked her whether she wished him to call Master John; at length with the coming of the last vomit, she suffered such difficulty in it that not being able to cast out the matter gathered in her throat, she commenced to choke with it. Seeing which the innocent child, thinking that she would die at once, weeping ran out and told this to Master John and the others of the household assembled there. And when likewise weeping they hastened thither, they found her in her agony. Then Master John, taking her hand, asked her for a sign whether she lived or whether she wished to be anointed. And when she made no reply, lighting a candle and setting it in a lantern, the priest placed the light behind her head, for he thought that she was still living, and therefore could not bear the light. He found that she was dead, and that she had escaped the wretchedness of the present life. But from the time when she last spoke until her expiry, scarcely the space of three Misereres intervened; and thus her end was seen to be short, as she had long before asked of the Lord. But the most patient virgin, pleasing to God and the angels, died on the twelfth of the Kalends of May, on the feast of SS. Tiburtius and Valerianus; in the year of the Lord's incarnation 1433, on the Tuesday within the Octave of Easter about the fourth hour after vespers, in the fifty-third year of her age, which according to the cycle of festivals had been completed on the Palm Sunday before her death. And very befittingly, God arranging the order of seasons, she passed out of this world in Easter week; that she who had long been a sharer of the sufferings of Christ in meditation and compassion, might also with Him on the holy paschal feast of His most joyous resurrection pass to the bliss of eternal life. And the chosen virgin of Christ stricken by divers scourges of afflictions passed away, after accomplishing from the beginning of her maladies thirty-eight years, in the commencement of the thirty-ninth, being worthy to be associated with the choirs of angels, who from the years of childhood strove to imitate the life of the angels in chastity.

CHAPTER XXVII

OF THE WONDERFUL PLACING OF HER ARMS, AND THE SHROUDING OF HER BODY

And after her death certain marvels were discovered about her body, concerning which sure witness is possessed. For her right arm, which for many years had been so dead that she had not been able to move it by herself, but afterwards through a sharp operation by a certain surgeon it had become somewhat movable, after her death, when her holy body was uncovered, contrary to all hope and knowledge, no one knowing how it had come to pass, was found beseemingly lying with her left arm on her breast, with the hands as it were joined and the fingers bent. For she had been wont while still alive to say to some that she hoped that yet before her death she would praise God with both arms outstretched, which also came to pass and was clearly seen by many after her death. For many years also, and about thirty before her death, she used many hair girdles to chastise her flesh, girded with the last of which for about three years, she ended her last day. When therefore she was dead, and having been uncovered for the burial, was about to be clothed again, those who were there found the aforesaid girdle about her shoulders, loosed from her body in a manner unknown to men, but whole and round and not untied from the links of its fastening.

She had also asked long before her death of the above named Master John her confessor that he would not suffer her after her death to pass a long delay upon the earth, but would at once see that she was clothed, and according to the manner arranged by her have her buried. And although he would willingly have done this, he was prevented by the violence of the

magistrates of the city, whom he could not resist. For they had bidden him under penalty of his goods and body not to remove her from the place. The body therefore remained until the morning of Wednesday clothed in the wonted manner, and placed in a wooden chest, and set in the same place where it had lain for nearly twenty years in life. And the same venerable body was clothed after the fashion of religious sisters in a robe of wool, girded without by the hair girdle which in life she had been wont to wear next the flesh. Then above her head was placed a round coif or a kind of circular mitre made of vellum, on the circle of which the glorious names Jesus and Mary were written with black ink, with which several hearts had been depicted as if transfixed with arrows or sharp darts. And all these things necessary for her burial she had prepared many years before, and thinking of her end she held them by her according to that word of the prophet, "Make ready to meet thy God, Israel, for the Lord shall come and He shall not be slack to render to each according to his works." But under her head, as she had desired, was placed a certain bag with her sweetly redolent tears of blood, which she had called roses, which from great charity and sorrow of heart had distilled from her eyes. These indeed flowing from her eyes in course of time, and congealed upon her cheeks, Master John her confessor, gently moistening with her other common tears, had carefully scraped off, and diligently storing them in a bag had kept by him in a clean casket.

CHAPTER XXVIII

OF THE WONDERFUL BEAUTY AND ASPECT OF HER COUNTENANCE

Now the virgin of exceeding humility had said that she would die like other men with very great sufferings, and that no miracles would happen at her death, which also befell as has already appeared. But nevertheless, lest God should seem altogether unmindful of the pain and toil of His poor and humble handmaid, and her praiseworthy patience be taken from the mouth of men, He also showed by undoubted signs before the sight of men with how great merits shone in Heaven the noble jewel long lying in the prison of the flesh. For her maiden face, which shunned the sight of men to behold more clearly the heavenly Spouse, presented no pallor or horror of death; but as if it had been anointed with oil or some aromatic liquor, shone with so great a brightness and becoming whiteness that it seemed to the beholders not as the common face of a mortal man or of a dead corpse, but as the likeness of a man glorified. For those who were present said that they had never seen so beautiful a picture. Whence also, although many often approached to see her several times they could never see her enough. Likewise also the whole body shone with the same whiteness and a similar brilliancy, and all her members were resplendent with such a flush of health and beseeming fleshiness, as if she had never suffered any infirmity. The cleft also of her forehead seen formerly during life utterly vanished; the feet likewise and the legs, the hands and arms, and the neck appeared corpulent, and the whole body as entire as if there had never been any injury or wound therein before, except only that in the wound of her right arm, and in one wound inflicted upon her by the men of Picardy, small scars like a thread appeared in sign of the striking. Now the aforesaid Master John had three

sisters german, who, when with other respectable matrons they watched by this venerable body, were filled with such grace by the sight and presence thereof that the whole time, to wit, from her passing to her burial, they were troubled by neither hunger, nor thirst, nor sleepiness.

CHAPTER XXIX

OF THE FLOCKING OF VISITORS TO HER DEAD BODY

But her death being known, and the report of the glory of her body flying far and wide, so great a concourse of men flowed to visit her even to midnight, all the days that she remained unburied, that from the different states and towns of Rotterdam, of Delft, of Leyden, and Briel, and from other neighbouring towns and districts, so many hastened to the sight of this body that their certain number beyond many thousands cannot be assigned nor easily expressed. For children of three or four years, as if accustomed to walking, hastened with such eagerness that they urged even men of adult age to visit such great relics. Then the virgin could say if she had lived, “Suffer the little children to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of Heaven” (Mark x 14). Having entered then the house in which was the holy bier, and because as children they were of small stature and could not lift themselves up to see the body in the place where it lay, many of them crying and grieving said: “Shall I not see this virgin, for whom I have come from so far?” Then the bystanders raised them up to see the face of the virgin, and after the sight sent them back to their homes with an alms of white bread. And what is more wonderful, there was also there a matron with a baby of one year and three months, which infant indeed, with joined hands and face turned towards the coffin, fixed his eyes so reverently and gravely thereon that the watchers and assistants of the sacred remains seeing and wondering at the infant’s devotion were moved to tears.

CHAPTER XXX

OF THE STAINS WHICH SHE CONTRACTED FROM UNCLEAN MEN

On account of the most brave endurance of her sufferings, and her frequent familiarity with angels and conversation in Heaven, this virgin had arrived at such purity that, touched on the hand by unworthy and unclean men while still living, she sometimes visibly contracted stains, of which black marks remained on her hands two or three days, which had not been seen there before. So also after her death something of the like happened. For when her face after her death shone as has been said with such brilliancy, a certain matron came with others to visit, and passed her beads which she held in her hand over her face out of devotion as she thought, and immediately afterwards the maiden face from that contact was noticeably darkened. Wherefore, when her body had been placed in the church and some of the bystanders asked that it should be shown and the coffin opened for them, the rest, who knew of this darkening, absolutely forbade this to be done, fearing lest if it should be further darkened by the onlooking of the unworthy, others might be scandalised thence.

CHAPTER XXXI

OF HER REVERENTIAL BURIAL

At length on the Friday within the octave of Easter, which was the fourth day after her happy passing from this vale of tears and from the enclosure of the earthly dwelling, after the sacrifice of the Mass had been most devoutly celebrated she was given to burial, at the twelfth hour at midday, the sun shining brightly, and the day declining to its close, after the example of Christ, Who suffered on a Friday, died at the ninth hour, and was buried before sunset. To celebrate whose funeral rites was present the religious father Judocus, Prior of the Regulars of Briel, who had very often familiarly conversed with her in life, and had wisely tested many of the secrets of her sanctity. He persuaded for the better, and urged the people to suffer the servant of God to be buried in a Christian fashion. And when he had spoken the popular devotion agreed with the Prior, and at once her coffin, having been strongly fastened, the body of the holy virgin was given to burial after the example of Christ buried in the bosom of the earth, to be again raised by Him on the last day and glorified with all the saints in everlasting blessedness. And she was buried the beloved spouse of Christ, Lydia, white in virginity, deep in humility, perfected in patience, burning in charity, merciful, kind, excelling in devotion, sublime in contemplation, richly adorned with all the virtues and gifts of the Holy Ghost: not wrapt in silks, not enclosed in a marble tomb, but in a grave of stones befittingly formed with cement work; not in a royal city, but in her native town called Schiedam; not in a choir of clerics nor in a sanctuary of priests, but in the common cemetery of the parochial church of St. John Baptist, to the east of the temple, where the grave of the virgin may be seen and visited by all the inhabitants: not, however, deep in the earth nor covered above with earth, nor lifted high above the earth, but on beams of wood laid across within a

stone grave. And this indeed very fittingly, that as for thirty years she had not touched the earth in life, so the earth should not touch her in death nor a mound of earth cover the casket of her body. Over whom is placed a large stone of red colour, beseemingly adorned within with divers red crosses, raised about two cubits above the mound of the grave.

CHAPTER XXXII

OF THE MIRACLES AFTER HER DEATH

After the burial of the venerable virgin, as many faithful visited her grave and honoured it with free offerings who asserted that they had been cured of various sicknesses and diseases the rulers of the city and the authorities of the church, having conceived a most praiseworthy design for the increase of the honour of God, the year following had built a stone chapel with an altar near her grave, about the feast of the ten thousand Martyrs, to the praise and glory of God and the special memory of the same virgin, in the year of the Lord 1434.

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE NARRATION OF THREE MIRACLES

But now to prove this virgin's holiness it seems altogether befitting at the end of the book to adjoin, to the honour of God and the praise of this holy virgin, of many signs three most notable miracles recently wrought by the cooperation of God, which are proved on the faith of worthy men testifying to her sanctity, and are reported by the lips of many.

FIRST MIRACLE

There was in the city of Delft a certain maiden who, continually keeping her bed for eight years, was grievously sick. This maiden four masters skilled in medicine and famous of repute visited, and moved by human pity, but urged more by the love of God, then strove to aid her. But the illness of this virgin was altogether unknown to these now mentioned masters, nor could any one of them give a remedy which might profit the sick girl. Among whom one of the masters, Master William Sonderdank, an approved doctor, wondering much, said to the above named maiden: "Thou hast not yet suffered so long a time such great pains as that blessed virgin Lydwine, because of whose merits the Lord now works many miracles in our parts." The sick virgin then hearing this, of her own devotion, or rather urged by divine inspiration, recited as many times the Lord's Prayer, commonly called the Our Father, as there are members in the human body, to the honour of God and this holy virgin Lydwine. It befell therefore after this that the happy virgin Lydwine visibly visited the sick maiden, giving her a remedy of medical art, and truly healed, she arose sound, walking, eating, and doing the works of maids in health. Whereat the aforesaid master, very much astounded, testifies that this is most true.

SECOND MIRACLE

The second miracle happened at Gouda, a most noted city of Holland. There was there in a cloister of virgins a certain nun who had a contraction of the nerves in one leg; which leg was so bent and shrunken that she could not walk, nor stretch it in any way to the length of the other by a space of two palms. She would willingly have visited this doctor Master William Sonderdank abovenamed, who before had cured one of the same house, sent to him in Delft, with the remedies of his art and the help of the grace of God in the space of eight weeks, but she could not obtain permission from her superiors. Saddened therefore, she wept bitterly several days, because she would remain lame all the days of her life, as she thought, ill content to be thus. At length came that blessed virgin Lydwine of a night speaking with her, and saying that she should ask of the sisters that every nun of that house should recite five Our Fathers and Hail Marys to the honour of God and the virgin Lydwine herself; and on the Sunday should have herself carried to her own church, and thus she should recover the health of the lame leg. Which was done without delay. For, having obtained leave of her confessor, she was carried to the church as Lydwine had said to her by vision, and during Mass she suddenly obtained the perfect cure of her leg; going out most joyously by herself, and rendering the greatest thanks to God, Who had worked that miracle by the merits of the most happy virgin Lydwine.

THIRD MIRACLE

But the third miracle happened at Leyden, a well-known town of the country of Holland. In this populous city there was a certain religious virgin who had in the neck a hard cancer about the size of a large apple, so that she could neither drink nor eat nor bend herself, if she did not wish to be choked by the exceeding difficulty of breathing. She came without shoes and without linen to the grave of the aforesaid holy virgin to implore the succour of health, and not having gained it she returned with great sadness, not knowing what good things were to come to her. The night following after her return from the tomb, and awakened from her sleep, she was entirely cured of that cancerous growth which she had suffered for nearly eight years, as was known to many. This virgin miraculously cured the

above mentioned Master William Sonderdank, doctor in medicine, saw with his own eyes and touched her neck with his hands; who also gives most trustworthy witness in his writing of all the foregoing, saying: “I witness to God that these three have been wrought within a short time; yea and many others which I have seen with my own eyes it would be too long to narrate.” These above written miracles have come to pass by God renewing wonders in our days, in the year of the Lord one thousand four hundred forty-eight, the most holy Pope Nicholas the Fifth sitting in the apostolic See, in the second year of his reign.

PRAISE TO GOD ALMIGHTY.

SERMONS TO THE NOVICES REGULAR

THOMAS A KEMPIS

E-BOOK ALSO AVAILABLE IN PAPERBACK.

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OF THE LATERAN

CONTENTS

SERMONS TO THE NOVICES REGULAR

INTRODUCTION

PROLOGUE OF THE SERMONS TO THE NOVICES REGULAR

SERMONS TO THE NOVICES

PART I

SERMON I

OF THE CONCORD OF BRETHREN AND THE MELODY OF DIVINE PRAISE

SERMON II

OF THE PRAISE OF A GOOD CONGREGATION

AN EXAMPLE OF TWO BRETHREN

ANOTHER REMARKABLE EXAMPLE

ANOTHER OF A CERTAIN CLERIC OFTEN GOING ABROAD

SERMON III

OF HUMBLY HEARING THE WORDS AND COUNSELS OF ELDERS

SERMON IV

OF HOLDING GOOD DISCOURSES TOGETHER

SERMON V

OF HAVING PATIENCE AMID THE SLOTHFUL AND PERVERSE

SERMON VI

OF THE NIGHT WATCHES AGAINST THE ASSAULT OF SLEEPINESS

AN EXAMPLE

ANOTHER

ANOTHER

ANOTHER

SERMON VII

OF GUARDING THE MOUTH AND DILIGENCE IN LABOUR WITH OBEDIENCE TO THE

SUPERIOR

SERMON VIII

OF SHUNNING VAINGLORY, AND THAT PRAISE IS TO BE RENDERED TO GOD ALONE

SERMON IX

OF THE RISK OF MANY EVILS FROM MUCH BANDYING OF WORDS

PART II

SERMON X

OF THE MANY TRIALS OF THE JUST FOR THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

SERMON XI

OF THE DAILY MARTYRDOM AND WARFARE IN THE RELIGIOUS STATE

SERMON XII

OF THE WISDOM OF CONFESSORS AND THE CONTINENCE OF RELIGIOUS

SERMON XIII

OF A CAREFUL WATCH OVER THE HEART, AND THE GRACE OF INTERIOR
DEVOTION

RELIGIOUS, NOTE

AN EXAMPLE OF SILENCE

AN EXAMPLE OF SOLITUDE

SERMON XIV

OF CONSTANCY AND PERSEVERANCE IN THE STATE OF RELIGION

AN EXAMPLE

SERMON XV

OF CAREFUL WATCHFULNESS OF THE YOUNG AGAINST MANY TEMPTATIONS

SERMON XVI

OF THE STRICT JUDGEMENT OF GOD, WHERE ALL CREATURES SHALL ACCUSE US

SERMON XVII

OF SHUNNING VAINGLORY AND PURSUING HUMBLE OBEDIENCE

AN EXAMPLE

SERMON XVIII

OF THE SPIRITUAL WARFARE AGAINST VICES

SERMON XIX

OF THE DIVERS WARS AND PERILS OF THIS LIFE

AN EXAMPLE OF OBEDIENCE

AN EXAMPLE OF PATIENCE

PART III

SERMON XX

OF DAILY TAKING UP THE CROSS EMBRACED IN RELIGION

AN EXAMPLE CONCERNING THE HOLY CROSS

ANOTHER

ANOTHER

ANOTHER

ANOTHER

ANOTHER

ANOTHER

A PRAYER OF PRAISE OF THE HOLY CROSS

SERMON XXI

OF THE VENERATION AND COMMEMORATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

AN EXAMPLE

ANOTHER

ANOTHER

ANOTHER

ANOTHER

SERMON XXII

OF THE PRAISE OF THE MOST SWEET NAME OF JESUS: AND OF HIS MOST SWEET
MOTHER MARY

A PRAYER

SERMON XXIII

OF THE DEVOUT SERVICE OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN AND THE REMEMBRANCE OF
HER NAME

SERMON XXIV

OF THE SORROW AND CONSOLATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

SERMON XXV

OF THE EXCELLENCE OF THE MERITS AND OF THE PRIVILEGES OF THE GIFTS OF
THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

SERMON XXVI
ON THE FEAST OF ST. AGNES, VIRGIN AND MARTYR

OF THE THREE LOVELY GARMENTS OF MOST BLESSED AGNES, VIRGIN

SERMON XXVII
OF THE GOLDEN CROWN ON THE HEAD OF MOST HOLY AGNES, VIRGIN

A PRAYER

AN EXAMPLE

ANOTHER

ANOTHER

ANOTHER

ANOTHER

ANOTHER

ANOTHER

SERMON XXVIII
ON THE DEDICATION OF THE CHURCH: OF THE FIVE LAMPS OF THE TEMPLE

SERMON XXIX
OF THE ORNAMENTS AND VIRTUES OF THE MINISTERS IN THE TEMPLE OF GOD

SERMON XXX
OF THE FOUR CONDITIONS BELONGING TO THE BUILDING AND BEAUTY OF THE
HOUSE OF GOD

AN EXAMPLE

ANOTHER

ANOTHER

ANOTHER

SERMONS TO THE NOVICES REGULAR

INTRODUCTION

FOR many years the Venerable Thomas à Kempis had charge of the young Religious at Mount St. Agnes. The office of training the Novices was with the Windesheimers usually attached to the sub-priorship, at least in the early days of the Congregation, and a Novice-Master, as such, was not appointed. Twice Thomas was elected Sub-Prior of the Monastery on the Mount. We find him named as holding that post in 1429, in a list of the Brethren who went into exile rather than disobey a papal interdict laid upon the land. As a vacancy had occurred by the promotion of Brother Theodoric from Sub-Prior to Prior in 1425, it is reasonable to presume that our author was appointed at that date.

During the period of exile in Frisia, three years or longer, the community would be more or less disorganized; moreover, during part of that time Thomas was posted by his superiors at Arnheim to aid his brother John à Kempis, who was failing in health and who died in 1432, assisted by Thomas to the end. Meanwhile another had been elected Sub-Prior of Mount St. Agnes. But in 1448 we find our Venerable Thomas chosen Sub-Prior again, and this time he seems to have remained in office for a long period: the next Sub-Prior mentioned is Henry Ruhorst, whose death is chronicled in 1458.

The fact of our author's close relations as Sub-Prior with the younger members of the Community explains not only the present volume of sermons, but also the great proportion among his writings of treatises intended chiefly for youthful Religious, as "The Discipline of the Cloister," "The Monk's Alphabet," "The Manual for Beginners," etc. "He composed various treatises for the edification of youth, unadorned and simple in style, but truly great in thought and efficacy," says the unknown continuator of the "Chronicles of Mount St. Agnes," in his necrology notice of our Venerable Thomas. And he adds, "he possessed a wonderful gift of consoling the tempted and afflicted."

In fact, tradition represents him to us as particularly skilled in the direction of souls, a gift it is not difficult to concede to the author of the "Imitation," and as especially happy and successful in the encouragement and instruction of the young. "There is an interesting picture given of him," writes Kettlewell, "which is said to have been taken from an engraving on copper, found over his grave when his bones were dug up in the burial ground of Mount St. Agnes. In this picture Thomas à Kempis is represented as coming forward on the elevated part of the chancel to receive a young man anxiously desirous to forsake the world and its vanities, and to enter upon a religious state. The young man is seen approaching the reverend Father, reverently bowing his knee, and saying:

'O where is peace? For thou its path hast trod.'

This is on a scroll which he bears in his hand; and Thomas à Kempis gives the following reply on another scroll which he carries:

'In poverty, retirement, and with God.' "

This answer is certainly characteristic, as a perusal of the present volume will abundantly show.

The Windesheimers were exceedingly careful, as might be expected, in the reception and subsequent training of candidates for the Religious Life in the Canonical Order. One reads in their Statutes or Constitutions: "We consider that the greatest possible care and diligence should be exercised in the reception of Novices; inasmuch as the perverse and indocile, if admitted to mingle with the good, are often wont to cause serious harm to religion, and inasmuch as the good after their admission, if left without due instruction, suffer grave loss in the negligence of religion."

The Constitutions then proceed to proscribe all merely human motives in the acceptance of postulants: "For the admission therefore of all who may come and seek the religious habit, we decree that this primary care and caution be exercised, namely that neither for dignity of family nor for multitude of riches, nor for any other consideration pertaining to the pomp or avarice of this world, any be accepted, whose fellowship is known as likely to cause harm or danger or disgrace to the rest established in religion, either because of the depravity of their own conduct, or through the annoyance and importunity of others among their acquaintance or kinsfolk."

Then are added the qualifications which should be sought in the candidates: “But we counsel that you should consider in those who would be received, in the first place good conduct, and especially that they be meek and tractable and not impatient of correction.”

Further precautions are then taken to secure that no candidate be admitted even to the Noviciate hastily or without full deliberation: “Unknown persons who do not bring with them trustworthy testimonials we do not admit before the probation of half a year, unless the Community unanimously, or at least three parts of the Community, judge that a less lengthy delay may be accorded.

“During this period they should be tried whether they be constant in their purpose, and perfectly renounce the pomps of the world by the casting aside of worldly garments, by the exercise of toil and humiliation, by ready submission to all commands and hardships, by mortification of their own will and opinion, by observance of silence and quiet, by zeal in sacred reading and prayer, by the grateful acceptance of blame and correction, by cheerfulness in the watchings and fasts, by readiness to confess their sins, and to disclose their temptations, and all other the like wherein they can be proved, whether they truly will to die to the world and themselves and live to God in the perfection of holy Religion.”

Excluded from admission were: (1) Youths under eighteen; after the Council of Trent, the age limit was sixteen. (2) A Cleric or Lay-Brother from another Monastery, except by leave of the General Chapter. (3) Two brothers, or father and son, in the same house, except again by permission of the General Chapter; in this case the second comer was not to have a voice in the Chapter, except by dispensation. (4) Secular priests, or those of illegitimate birth.

In accordance with papal decrees, no gift of any kind, under any pretext whatever, was to be demanded of the postulants.

If, finally, a candidate was accepted as such, he was to be very fully instructed in the obligations, burdens, and difficulties of the Religious Life, and in the Rule and Statutes of the Order; if this severe presentment did not dismay him he was to be further initiated into the choir duties of reading and chant. Then, on an appointed day he was led into the Chapter Room, where, duly instructed beforehand, he prostrated himself at the Prior's feet.

“What is your request?” the Prior asked.

“I beg God’s mercy and your fellowship,” was the reply.

Then rising to his knees at the command of the Prior, he is questioned by him before the whole assembly: whether he had come from another Order: whether he was free: whether he had plighted his troth to any woman: whether he was bound by any vow: whether he suffered from any hidden and incurable disease: whether he was involved in any quarrel or debt: whether born in lawful wedlock: whether he was capable of receiving Holy Orders.

After receiving a satisfactory answer to all these various questions, the Prior again insisted on the difficulties and hardships of the Religious Life, especially such as were entailed in the renunciation of self-will and constant obedience, warning him at the same time with what unsparing severity a strict observance of every point of religious discipline would be exacted, and how sternly every defect would be punished. The candidate is then asked whether he still perseveres in his request.

“Then if undismayed and constant he reply, that trusting solely in the loving-kindness of God and the prayers of the Brethren, he will accomplish all these things, the Prior shall say: ‘May the Lord grant thee to fulfill all this, that thou mayest attain eternal life.’ ”

Taking the kneeling postulant’s hands in his own, the Prior proceeds: “On the part of God and our own, we grant thee our fellowship.”

He would add that the postulant was fully free to depart before his profession, as it was also always in the power of the Order to dismiss him before that act, should he prove an unsuitable subject: and finally a day was assigned him for his clothing in the religious habit.

For this solemn investiture, which was to mark the commencement of his Noviciate proper, the postulant was instructed to prepare himself by a General Confession and Holy Communion. The clothing took place in the Sacristy, between the recitation of the Office and the Conventual Mass: the tyro was divested of his upper garment and robed in the white cassock and linen rochet of the Order. He was then led to the High Altar and lay prostrate there during the singing of the “Veni Creator” and the customary versicles and collects. Finally, he was received to the kiss of peace by the Prior and the assembled Brethren.

The Novice’s rochet, then as now, was distinguished from that of a professed Canon by short sleeves, in place of the long, to signify his

freedom as yet from the vows. He was also not permitted to wear the amess, an article of dress which survives to-day in the cape of the Secular Canon.

The Novice was now entrusted to a Brother “of good repute,” in the early years of the Congregation usually the Sub-Prior, to be diligently instructed even in the minutest details of the Regular Life, “as to his carriage, his bearing, his every gesture, how to keep his eyes cast down, to speak modestly and not hastily, and in all his movements to give proof of humility.” He was also to be taught how to read and chant in the different tones, according to the diversity of the season; and it was the special duty of the Novice to sing the versicles on his side of the choir.

“He shall also be taught how to address the Prior and the Brethren, and that he must especially show reverence to the Prior. And, above all, he shall be frequently admonished to change his worldly conduct and habits unto better, and to put off the old man with his deeds, confessing and punishing with tears the evil he has wrought, repressing also his vices and the concupiscence of the flesh, mortifying likewise his own will and judgement for the good of obedience, and embracing all things lowly and base, and labours of whatsoever kind, and then by pursuing virtue become a new man in Christ.”

And the better to attain this, “as one dead to the world and himself, let him in no wise mingle with the external affairs or business of the house in private or public, seeking to live to God alone, a zealous guardian of his cell and quiet; let him shun growing slack in idleness, and following the counsel and instruction of his master let him set his soul to spiritual progress, being instant in holy reading and prayer, and compunction of heart and meditation, or else in labour of the hands in his cell or without, as shall be enjoined him, according to the rule of our common practice.” It would be difficult to find a more exact conformity than exists between these prescriptions and the oft-repeated counsels contained in the following discourses.

And how well the following paragraph fits in with the subject matter of his Third Sermon: “And that he may the more efficaciously consult his own welfare, he should very often manifest to his master all his temptations and the secrets of his heart and his whole life, and have nothing that he would wish concealed from him or the Prior of the house.”

And again, “let no man,” says à Kempis, “looking at others, neglect himself: having a care of himself before all, let him be silent as to the rest, which does not concern his charge,” p. 19. And the Constitutions, speaking of the Novice: “And he should not freely thrust himself into the discourse or business of others, but showing honour to all, let him hardly venture to say anything in the presence of others, and when questioned, let him learn to answer humbly and in few words, with modesty and fear.”

“And to the Community gatherings, where his presence is required, especially in the Divine Office, let him accustom himself to hasten devoutly and betimes, day and night, with all alacrity and fervour of spirit.” To this “alacrity and fervour of spirit,” especially in the Divine Office, our Venerable Thomas encourages his Novices in his very first Sermon: and again in Sermon VI he encourages them to struggle against the very natural difficulty that must have beset many to remain wakeful through the long night vigils. In the third Example which he cites there for the edification of his young hearers, it is thought that he is referring to the holy man William Vorniken, for many years Prior of Mount St. Agnes, so well does the narrative fit in with what we learn of the character of this venerable Canon from Busch in his Chronicle of Windesheim. But for the rest it must be freely admitted that joyous devotion in the praise of God was a common characteristic of all the Devout Brothers and Canons of Windesheim, and pre-eminently of Thomas himself.

Who can read unmoved the eloquent testimony of Francis Tolensis on this point? And this writer earnestly assures us that in his brief biography he has carefully eschewed all mere rhetorical flourish and has strictly adhered to the simple truth, as found in contemporary documents, or handed down by tradition in Mount St. Agnes, of which monastery he was himself a member.

“In the Church,” he writes, “and in the performance of ecclesiastical ceremonies, it is difficult to describe his rapt attention, and I might say inspiration. While he chanted the psalms, his eyes were ever raised towards Heaven, and he appeared to be filled with a divine enthusiasm, captivated and carried away by the unutterable sweetness of the holy psalmody: so that he never stood with his heels resting upon the ground; that is to say, as he meditated the tips of his toes alone touched the floor, the rest of his body was lifted heavenwards, whither his soul tended with all its desires. In the

Divine Office he always remained standing erect, never sitting, never resting his arm, or leaning back against the stall. Of those that entered the choir, night or day, he was always the first; of those that left he was always the last. Incredible was his delight in and his love for the Divine worship and the services of the Church. So evident was this pleasure that one day some one remarked to Thomas that he considered him very fortunate, and after all not so much deserving of praise in the alacrity of his voice, the joyousness of his soul, and his piety in singing the psalms, because those psalms were as sweet to him as salmon. ‘Thanks be to God,’ Thomas replied, ‘the psalms are indeed to me as salmon; nevertheless their taste is frequently turned to bitterness and death, when I perceive any idly inattentive to the matter in hand, or sparing their voice.’ ”

Finally, the Master of the Novice is bidden “often to consider his daily life, and whether he does anything in excess or in default of what is befitting, in order to correct him in secret and instruct him as may be necessary.”

And here I will close the quotations from the Windesheim Constitutions regarding the reception and training of the Novices. Those who desire an account of the Solemn Profession, or taking of the vows, which generally followed at the end of the year’s noviciate, may consult the “Life of the Venerable Thomas à Kempis,” quoted above, p. 114.

Enough meanwhile has been said to enable the reader of the following Sermons to appreciate the position of à Kempis as Novice Master, and the appropriateness of the greater part of the discourses here given. For they treat precisely, as we have already partly seen, of those virtues and practices which were especially required of the young Religious, if they were to progress and persevere in their holy vocation: lessons of obedience, humility, modesty, patience, love of the cloister, of solitude and silence, zeal for the worship of God, and devotion to the angels and saints, to the holy Mother of God, and above all to the person of Jesus Christ, the whole interwoven with constant reference to the eternal rewards and punishments of the life to come.

For the rest these are favourite subjects with à Kempis, and are to be found passim throughout his works.

Usually, as befits the matter and the audience, and as the author himself says in the Preface, the style is of the simplest. But there is always to be

remarked that easy flow of language together with that precision of expression, which are familiar to à Kempis scholars, but for which the venerable Thomas has not yet received sufficient general recognition: at times indeed, as for instance in Sermon XVI, he rises to heights of real eloquence, not unworthy of the great St. Augustine, whose works he so closely studied.

Moreover it should be noted that although these discourses are addressed directly to Novices and adapted chiefly to their needs, they are animated with the same spirit, they vibrate and palpitate with the same life as the other works of the Venerable Author, and especially his masterpiece, the "Imitation," the spirit namely and the life of the Mystics of Windesheim. The essence of this mysticism, as of all true mysticism, is union of the soul with God. The first step towards this union is the removal of all obstacles in the way. The first hindrance is sin: hence the need not only of the abandonment of sin now in the thorough conversion of the soul and all its faculties to God, but of constant further purification by continual grief and penance for past guilt. Then must follow the removal of all other impediments induced by the soul's undue attachment to self and creatures, and this by mortification in every shape and form, exterior and interior, by obedience, humility, patience, poverty, chastity. And yet all this is only so much preparatory spade-work, the degree and the perfection of the actual union itself, the realization of the mystic state, are in proportion only to the actual Love of the soul for its Creator, a Love nurtured first by sensible affections and intense personal devotion to the God-Man, Christ, but ascending finally to a simple, indescribable resting and breathing of the soul in the contemplation of the pure, indivisible Essence of the Godhead.

The reader will notice and doubtless smile at the simplicity of the reason given by the author in the Prologue for his division of the Sermons into three parts, containing respectively nine, ten, and eleven discourses. But any one acquainted with the writings of the early Fathers knows how fondly they dwelt on the figurative symbolism of numbers: and saturated, so to speak, as they were, with these writings, it is but natural that the Windesheimers should have acquired something of the same habit. In explanation of the rather obscure passage, regarding the Third Part that "it contains eleven Sermons to designate the religious state, in the renouncing of the world and carrying of the cross," I venture to suggest that eleven is

taken as typical of the Cloister, because it consists of ten, the number of the Decalogue, plus one, the counsel of perfection embraced in Religion.

Before concluding I must refer to the extraordinary statement of the Rev. S. Kettlewell that “there is some question, however, as to whether he (à Kempis) ever wrote the third part or series of the ‘Sermons to the Novices.’ The subjects are wholly different from the first two series, and relate more to the corruptions and superstitions of the Church before the Reformation era. But supposing those sermons in the third series were his, it is questionable whether he would have suffered them to have been published, had he been alive. Of all those treatises which are found re-written by his own hand, we may presume that he gave his sanction to their being made public. But of the others there is reason to doubt whether he would have wished them to have gone forth at all, or not without some correction at least.”

Of course, the sole reason for the position here assumed by Mr. Kettlewell is found in the second sentence quoted above. The same unhappy prejudice explains much that mars his otherwise excellent work. But I am convinced that even he could never have penned these words, if he had been privileged, as I was, to see and handle the autograph volume of à Kempis, containing these Sermons, bound with the Life of Lydwine, Virgin, now preserved in the University Library, Louvain.

Dr. Pohl’s text, of which the following pages are an exact rendering, is a very painstaking edition of this precious original.

THE TRANSLATOR.

ST. IVES, CORNWALL.

Feast of St. Joseph, 1907.

PROLOGUE OF THE SERMONS TO THE NOVICES REGULAR

TO the beloved brethren in Christ, Innocent, Simplician and the other followers of the Crucified, who love the discipline of holy religion: a Brother Pilgrim dwelling in the vale of tears: humbly seeking the aid of your prayers. May the peace of Christ abound in your hearts: and may manifold patience be vouchsafed to you and to me in the Cross of Christ. The Sermons, which although given to our Novices by way of sweet conference at different times, I have gathered into one: I have thought good, and deemed just to communicate in charity to you. Albeit, therefore, the discourse be uncouth and the matter not subtle: nevertheless, wishing to please simple minds, that which the Lord has inspired and bestowed: I freely offer to the pious and devout to read. But if haply an ill-chosen word offend any one, I pray that my littleness be forgiven: and that what seems outwardly to sound ridiculous, be changed to something better. And because examples often move one's hearers more than words alone: therefore taught by the custom of blessed Gregory, in several places at the end of the sermon for greater insistence I have briefly noted certain examples, as they came to mind. Receive graciously, Brothers, what I offer to you as to dear friends: pray that it may be all to the honour of God and the profit of many.

The Sermons of the First Part of this Book

The Sermons of the Second Part

The Sermons of the Third Part

The End of the Chapters

This Book contains thirty sermons, and it has three Parts. The First Part contains nine sermons, to designate the nine choirs of the angels. The Second Part contains ten sermons, to designate the decalogue of the law, according to the number of the ten commandments. The Third Part contains

eleven sermons, to designate the religious state, in the renouncing of the world and carrying of the Cross, according to the counsel of our Saviour saying: “If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.”

SERMONS TO THE NOVICES

PART I

SERMON I

OF THE CONCORD OF BRETHREN AND THE MELODY OF DIVINE PRAISE

BEHOLD how good and how pleasant it is: for brethren to dwell together in unity. David, a saint and a truly great prophet before God, filled with the Holy Ghost, composed many psalms: some for the seeking of aid in tribulation, others in thanksgiving for deliverance from enemies. But seldom or never did he produce so good and so pleasant a melody as he uttered in this short gradual canticle, saying: Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. For all naturally seek good and pleasantness: but flee from evil and sadness, as man's unhappiness. Therefore eager to speak of brotherly love and concord, passing over in silence other present goods he rejoiced especially in the devotion of brethren: and taking up his pleasant psalter with the harp he sang in the house of the Lord saying: Behold how good and how pleasant it is: for brethren to dwell together in unity. Truly, Brethren, there is no greater happiness in a monastery of religious and a community of Brothers and Sisters: than unanimity of soul, and concord in virtue with observance of the rule and statutes: according to the precepts of superiors, and the counsel of elders. But this holy and God-pleasing concord of brethren the devil, the enemy of all the good, ceases not to combat and assault: in divers ways day and night laying snares to beguile slothful and unwary souls: and at one time indeed he troubles openly by vain speeches: at another he tempts and unsettles by vile suggestions: thereby to draw away the few soldier of Christ from his holy purpose: or to bring the veteran follower into slothfulness; or to urge the weak into murmuring: or to bind the passionate in obstinacy. But against these wiles and terrors of Satan a united

community of brethren struggles and triumphs; who watch in vigils by night, toil in labours by day: give heed to sacred reading; instant in devout prayers and the melody of psalms sing praise to God: and as it were trumpeting together on heavenly bugles put the demon to flight. For they torment him mightily when they fast, they strike him when they take the discipline: they tread him under foot when they beg pardon, they crush him when they humble themselves; they terrify him when they call on Jesus, they torture him when they name Mary: they drive him away when they sign themselves with the cross, they burn him when they worship the Crucified; they conquer when they obey, they straiten when they abide in solitude: they bind when they keep strict silence. Truly this is the holy assembly of the brethren who seek the Lord; who seek the face of the God of Jacob: who spurn the world, love Christ, renounce themselves and all things for God's sake; fight against the devil and his host until he retires: and is afraid to return again soon to the camp of God. Weigh therefore, most beloved, how good it is and sweet for brethren to dwell together in unity; who gathered in one house, bound together by the profession of one rule, well ordered under one superior, rise together to the watches, come together to the canonical Hours, begin together to chant and read: strive together to perform the Divine Office worthily. Oh how pleasing and praiseworthy the assembly devoted chiefly to the praise of God; where there are as many resounding trumpets: as there are voices cheerfully singing in choir.

But hearing this, what say the demons who trouble religious? us flee from Israel," they say, "this holy and devout community: for the Lord fighteth with them against us. These are the true Israelites who, going forth from Egypt and the darkness of a worldly life, for Christ's sake have left relatives and friends; and now clothed in the habit of holy religion, have vowed themselves to God for ever and have commenced bravely to fight against us: certainly to our confusion and to the increase of their glory." Stand with constancy therefore, brethren, armed by prayers against the foes of your salvation, fearing the onslaught of none: but trusting in the Lord give thanks for all the blessings bestowed upon you, in preference to many wandering in the world. Grow not weary of rising every night to the nocturnal watches; but when the signal is given, throw off sleepiness from your eyes, distractions from your hearts: dissoluteness from your conduct. Ah, dearly beloved, give heed to the presence of Christ, the guard of angels, the

reverence due to the Sacrament and the relics of the saints; in whose sight you stand and sing psalms: although with bodily eyes you see them not. Beware carefully of vain imaginations and unclean spirits: lest they find room to enter and lie hid in you. Swiftly turn away your face from the traffic of the devil: sign your hearts with the sign of the holy cross: flee to the Passion of Christ: blush to think on other things than the words of God which you read and chant. Begin now to lead a celibate life with the angels; keep peace and concord with all: give occasion of scandal to none by words or offensive actions. In the charity of Christ bear with the shortcomings of the weak: be not, however, in agreement with their bad habits or complaints. Pray often for the tried and the tempted: fear lest the like befall you, or you incur worse. And to all show an example of true humility, mildness, patience, silence and obedience: that you may receive an everlasting reward from God with His saints and elect in Heaven. For if you knew their least joy: you would fly to all the things that please God: and would hasten to the choir where things divine and heavenly are discoursed day and night. When, therefore, you feel weariness of heart from the burden of the toil: remember the eternal rewards promised you in Heaven. Whence blessed Paul, who toiled more than all, arousing the slothful, strengthening the weak: amid his labours recalled the things of Heaven to mind saying. "The sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared: with the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us." Never shall the servant of God possibly be overcome in the combat, or weighed down by the toil of time: who always bears in mind eternal goods or evils. Who therefore wishes to have a heart pure and quiet, let him shut out from himself all earthly ease and human solace. For speedily is lost the desire of Heaven acquired in silence: unless it be guarded with all diligence from rumours from without.

A convent of monks is like the salt sea, which cannot retain within it dead bodies: but at once casts up on the shore what is corrupt, but nourishes what is healthy and fresh: and bringing it to perfection, renders it agreeable to the beholder. Know therefore that a carnal man concealed under a poor garment, cannot long disguise himself: but either in himself he falls away through lukewarmness, and dries up in his fervour; or he speedily departs, or meditates departure: or remaining with murmuring, shows of himself the corruption of perverse conduct. And because he is light of heart and unbridled of mouth, he often mocks others; because proud and passionate,

he arouses strife among the peaceful, and accuses the simple. And because he has not the root of humility, and heeds not to pluck out the thorns of sensuality: therefore he is unable to produce the sweet flowers of chastity with the fruits of obedience and charity.

In a community of the Devout the hearts of many are tried, as gold in a burning furnace: whether their desires are of God, or conceived of the flesh. For who seek their own ease, and carelessly pass over community tasks and the observances of the Order; these make little progress in the spirit: but turning aside to outward things they often slip back to former evil ways. How shall anyone be able to persevere long in discipline and devotion; who does not strive manfully against temptations and passions? Wherefore, while little vices lie hid, the remedies should be applied in due time: lest the thorns growing up choke the good seed. For the Saviour says of certain feigned and lukewarm brothers, in whom there is not spiritual fervour: but only the outward humble habit is seen with the desire of honour. "Every plant which My heavenly Father hath not planted: shall be rooted up." in sooth he who does not build his house upon the strong rock, that is, his life upon Christ and true humility: when the wind of pride blows, he falls from the state of devotion to external occupations: and into divers temptations of the devil. From which evils may Jesus Christ, the Son of God, lovingly defend us: Who hath taught us by word and example to walk humbly: and ever to keep peace with the brethren without guile and dissipation. Amen.

SERMON II

OF THE PRAISE OF A GOOD CONGREGATION

BROTHER that is helped by his brother: is like a strong city. Beloved brethren, remark these words wisely and fruitfully uttered by Solomon: and keep with perseverance your places in a good community. Bear with one another in all humility and mildness, carrying your burdens: for the sake of escaping many dangers, and meriting very great rewards from God for your soul. a good Congregation: is as a tower of strength against the face of the enemy. For there a man lives with greater safety: there he is aided by many. And if at times he is troubled by one: again he is comforted by another. He who is of good will and seeks God: will make greater progress, and stand more firmly among them that seek God. There a man is more tried, and exercised in virtue: there he is frequently reprov'd for negligence. There he is drawn to higher perfection by word and example: there he is forced to consider and lament his own imperfection. There he is aroused by the fervour of one: he is taught by the humility of another; he is moved by the obedience of this one: he is edified by the patience of that. There he blushes to be less generous: there he is ashamed to be found less eager. There he finds some to fear; there he has some to love: and thus he profits by all. There the correction of another, is his own warning: there another's danger, is his mirror. There one is the warden of another: and one proves another in patience. There a man bears and is borne: there he hears and sees much from which he may learn. There the rule and holy custom keep in good: there confession and discipline correct excesses. There the good are commended that they may become better: there the careless are rebuked that they may grow fervent again. There a man is not suffered to become

lukewarm: nor to act according to his own whim. There he is compelled to serve the spirit: and to resist the desires of the flesh. There there are divers offices: and many charitable services are performed. There everything has its time: and each one goes to his task out of obedience. There no man is allowed to idle: but to each a measure of toil is assigned. There the weak are supported by the stronger: there the healthy visiting the sick rejoice to serve Christ. There when one fails, another takes his place: there the sound members take thought for the sickly. There the active toil for them that take leisure: there they, that take leisure in God, pray for them that toil. There while one reads, many are edified: there all respectively fulfilling their weekly offices, relieve one another, that they be not wearied. There a man has many to pray for him: and in his last hour to defend him against the devil. There he finds as many helpers as he has companions: to assist him in his need. There he falls happily asleep in the Lord; there he is speedily freed from Purgatory by the intercession of many. There after death he leaves as his heirs who will certainly be mindful of him at times; the servants of God whose devout pursuits shall be his joy in Heaven. There his toil and his edifying life shall not be forgotten: but shall profit as an example for many coming after. There those that follow are obliged to pray for them that go before: and to praise God for the good deeds of benefactors. There whatever good is performed: is considered as shared by all who rest therein. There those, who yet live, take thought for departed brethren that they may be loosed from their pains; and those, who are now reigning with Christ, supplicate for the wayfarers, that they may continue in good: and those, who still survive, long to join their brothers. There the good of the individual becomes the good of the community: there what is of time becomes eternal. There those that live together in time: shall rejoice together for eternity. A great therefore and a pleasant good: is the dwelling of many Devout in unity. Who perseveres in a holy Congregation unto the end, even if he be imperfect: because of the prayers of many, and the merits of the perfect by the mercy of God he shall attain a happy consummation. But who abandons a good Congregation: wandering as it were outside the harbour of perseverance and salvation, he exposes himself to the storms of the sea. For who separates himself from the midst of a Congregation: it is doubtful where he will yet persevere. The end will soon make clear: whether he departed moved by God, or by passion. Abide therefore in the

midst of the holy Congregation: and the Lord will abide with thee. For He Himself saith: am in the midst of you: as he that serveth.” And to His disciples He saith. are they who have continued with Me in My temptations.” If thou art good: remain and edify others. If thou art a sinner and weak: remain to be edified by others. But whithersoever thou shalt go, know that the devil will be thy enemy: and thy passion will follow thee, even if thou shouldst be alone and enclosed. For often from light words and a fanciful raiment without: is known the condition of the mind, what vanity is nourished within.

AN EXAMPLE OF TWO BRETHREN

Two brethren once arrived at the house of a certain man, a noble and a prince of the land: for some matter concerning the interests of the monastery. The good prince therefore observing them closely: noted the exterior habit and behaviour of each. And when they were gone, this wise man said to his lady in private: without, however, openly detracting any one: “It seemed to me that one of those either has recently come there: or will soon want to depart.” To whom the mistress in wonder said: “How do you know this?” He answered: “From the difference in garb and gesture, in words and behaviour: I guess the difference of life.” A short time after therefore: the thing that was hidden was made manifest.

ANOTHER REMARKABLE EXAMPLE

A certain Devout being grievously tempted by the devil: went out from the Congregation of the Brothers to seek comfort in the world in idle games. Having forsaken therefore the lowly fellowship of the clerics: he frequently joined the company of laymen. One day, however, going out beyond the city gate, he commenced to play with his comrades for money; and playing for some time he lost his stake: and what is worse the repute of a good conscience. When at length the game of pyramid was ended: he was called upon to pay his debts without further delay. He refuses to pay the tricksters their gains: he resists violently, he endeavours to escape: he struggles and will yield nothing of his own accord. The players therefore, excited and crowding together round the dishonest debtor like rabid dogs against a wolf: shout, push, strike with the hands, curse with the words: “Give up, cheat,

what thou owest.” But when he would not yield to his persecutors: being exceedingly angry, they bestowed on him many hard blows for the few pence. When he had at length come to himself: he was brought back by some people into the town. He sent word therefore to the Devout Brethren, his fellow countrymen, beseeching them with many prayers to visit him stricken down by sickness: telling them the story of his miserable passion. For the music of worldly amusement had been changed: into the mourning of bitter affliction. When they had heard this, the gentle Brothers visit the sick man, compassionating the soul in affliction; nevertheless they severely reprimand him for the crime he has committed: telling him that he received blows well deserved, according to those gospel words of our Lord: “Go out quickly into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in.” “For if,” say they, “thou hadst remained in the Congregation: thou wouldst not have received so many wounds.” Then he with much groaning: owned that he had done foolishly and sinned. “Therefore,” said he, “if I recover: by God’s help, I purpose to amend.” But many of the Brethren hearing of these misfortunes were seized with fear: and being rendered more constant made better progress, according to that of Solomon: “The wicked man being scourged: the fool shall be wiser.” It is good then to remain at home with the Brothers and to keep away from worldly company: and to undertake nothing without the superior’s advice: nor to extort permission to go out by false pretence or supplications. For that often causes regret in the end: which is ill obtained by our own whim. He who will make progress and persevere in the Congregation: ought to be open to his superior in confession: faithful in labour, true in word. Among the Brethren he should be modest, humble, silent, quiet: pious, well-behaved, patient, grateful, and obedient. These things make one dear to God: lovable to men and a trouble to no one.

ANOTHER OF A CERTAIN CLERIC OFTEN GOING ABROAD

A certain Cleric, who dwelt in a community of the Brothers for the sake of studies; often visited his friends in search of amusement: often also went to the places and houses of religious. The Brothers therefore and his fellow students: fearing danger for him from constant going abroad, said to him: “If thou wilt persevere in a good state, do not go out of the house so often:

be on thy guard against visiting friends, and familiarity with women.” When therefore he had been often and gravely warned by many: and did not abandon his bad habit; at length the temptation grew stronger and he left the holy company: and returning to his friends, took to himself a wife and became wholly worldly and dissipated.

SERMON III

OF HUMBLY HEARING THE WORDS AND COUNSELS OF ELDERS

ASK thy father and he will declare to thee: thy elders and they will tell thee. Beloved brethren, listen willingly to the wholesome counsels of your elders; and be not wise in your own conceits: lest you fall into the snare of the devil and incur scandal to your soul. Search not things sublime; nor curiously examine the deeds of others: but what is the will of God, and what you have promised to observe: always keep in mind. A certain devout religious said: “He who holds his peace concerning the affairs of all others: has peace with all.” O precious word: profitable to be ever kept in the soul. For the more a man is spread abroad without: the more is he lessened within. Let no man then, looking at others, neglect himself: having a care of himself before all, let him be silent as to the rest: which does not concern his charge. And so let every one, who wishes to be interior, say with the psalmist: “My soul is continually in my hands: and I have not forgotten Thy law.” Whoever will make progress in the spirit: let him give himself often to prayer and the privacy of silence; let him shun many questions and the making of long discourses: but rather let him devoutly pray with holy David: “O Lord, to Thee have I fled: teach me to do Thy will.” If you ask what is the will of God: blessed Paul plainly and clearly answers us all: “This is the will of God, your sanctification.” What is this sanctification; if not to keep away from evil, and daily to exercise oneself in good? If you do not know what is more pleasing to God, and what you should do for greater profit; go at once and diligently ask of your superior, or of the more experienced elders: lest it befall you to abound in your own sense, and err. What is the cause that so many fall away from their first devotion; and

make so little headway in true virtues? Because, alas! they depart little by little from the holy purpose of poverty and simplicity, which they received and learnt from the elders; and follow rather their own fancies, and devise new conveniences, dread things simple and lowly, seek the familiarity of men; desire to show their knowledge: and esteem themselves above even learned elders. And would that they would learn again the humble exercises of novices: and gratefully receive a little warning.

Brethren, let no man be ashamed to learn from the elders; let no man spurn to receive an edifying word from the juniors: for this is a praiseworthy sign of humility; this is a very good omen of spiritual progress: according to that proverb of Solomon: “A wise man shall hear and shall be wiser, and he that understandeth shall possess governments.” Who wishes to be wise and to be accounted learned before he listens and learns: he shall long remain foolish in the midst of the wise. It is a true proverb: “Who will not hear the master like a good scholar: he shall be beaten with the obstinate like an unmannered ass.”

Consider now in order from the writings of both Testaments, the holy fathers and doctors, the prophets and apostolic men resplendent in knowledge and virtues; how eager they were in life and in death to teach their children and subjects: how many secret things of God they foretold them concerning the future and heavenly goods under various figures and parables; thereby to render all their hearers well-disposed to observe the law: and to make them wishful to obtain all the divine promises both present and to come. For Moses, the chief teacher and lawgiver, spake thus: “Hear, O Israel, the commandments and judgements which I teach thee: that doing them thou mayest live. You shall not add to the word that I speak to you, neither shall you take away from it: and thou shalt teach them to thy children and children’s children.” And again in another place: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart and with thy whole soul: and with thy whole strength. And these words which I command thee this day shall be in thy heart, and thou shalt tell them to thy children: and thou shalt meditate upon them sitting in thy house, and walking on thy journey, sleeping and rising. And thou shalt bind them as a sign on thy hand; and they shall move between thy eyes: and thou shalt write them in the entry and on the doors of thy house.” Behold what holy precepts and godly

exercises of divine teaching are proposed to us by Moses: to be worthily followed also by all the faithful.

After holy Moses arose in his place Josue, a faithful minister chosen out of thousands: to whom the Lord said: “As I have been with Moses: so will I be with thee. Take courage and be very valiant; that thou mayest observe and do all the law, which Moses My servant commanded thee: and turn not from it to the right or to the left.” And because Moses laid his hand upon him, he merited the divine blessing; and he was filled with the spirit of wisdom which is most necessary for good government in a state and multitude: and the children of Israel obeyed him as Moses according to the commandment of the Lord. Hearing this each Brother, novice or professed, ought to apply it as a profitable example to himself, humbly obeying his superior or senior Brother for God’s sake, that he may deserve to have a heavenly blessing: because of his humility and ready obedience. For humble obedience merits a special grace from God; and it is protected from many snares of the devil: and it shall be excused in the judgement of the ill deeds and offences charged against it. Therefore I beseech you, younger ones, listen humbly to the seniors, who have long experience in many things; who have long borne in the Order the burden of the day and the heats; often wearied in body, often afflicted in mind. Whom God tried mightily in the fire of poverty as gold in the furnace of fire; and after long want and distress of heart He very often comforted them with the joy of the Holy Ghost and the sweetness of the Sacrament: as of old He fed the children of Israel in the desert with manna from Heaven.

It is read in the First Book of Kings, that Samuel, dear to God and men, when he was yet a small child, was offered by his holy mother Anna to God, and entrusted to the priest Heli to be instructed; that under his teaching he might be accustomed from boyhood humbly to serve God in the tabernacle of the altar: and in good conduct according to the law of God gradually be made perfect to receive higher and more holy things. Which also was done with the gracious favour of God. And he in everything to be done and decided strove to obey at once the priest, as the vicar of God: so that he did not presume even to go to sleep without his leave. For called thrice by the Lord in the night: he at once arose from his bed. And because as yet he did not know the divine revelation, readily he ran to the presence of the priest which was known to him: and submitted to the judgement of

his superior the voice, which he heard; trusting more to the experience of the old man and the advice of the priest: than to his own innocence which might easily be deceived in the secret things of God or foolishly lifted up. O what will this child be in the future: who was so respectful and obedient to his elder in the opening of life. Certainly as he grew in age he increased also in the grace of a more sublime revelation: so that after the death of his priest he became the judge of the whole people; and anointed kings by the order of the Lord: and by the power of his prayer vanquished the force of the enemy. For all knew from Dan to Bersabee: that Samuel was a faithful prophet of the Lord. Who often calling the people together, and reminding them of the very numerous blessings of God, rebuked them for the foolish worship of idols: and for their great ingratitude after so many favours bestowed. And because they had often offended God: therefore they deserved to be most grievously chastised by their foes. Then he earnestly calls back to the observance of the holy law all them that err, and says: “Put away the strange gods from among you; and prepare your hearts unto the Lord, and serve Him only: and He will deliver you out of the hands of your enemies.”

David also, the king, powerful and holy, anointed by Samuel with holy oil prince of the people: when he had mightily ruled for many years the nation of Israel; before his death called Solomon his son to him: and charged him saying: “I am going the way of all flesh. Take thou courage and show thyself a man, and keep the charge of the Lord thy God: to walk in His ways, and observe His ceremonies, and His precepts, and judgements, and testimonies: as it is written in the law of Moses.” Again in a certain psalm inspired by the Holy Ghost, instructing the people commended to him, and urging them to the worship of God he prays and saith: “Attend, O my people, to my law: incline your ear to the words of my mouth. How great things He commanded to our fathers that they should make the same known to their children: that another generation might know them. The children that should be born and should rise up: and should declare them to their children. That they may put their hope in God, and may not forget the works of the Lord: and may seek His commandments.” Behold how devout an admonition of the glorious king; to the keeping of the holy law.

Solomon also the most wise of kings following his father's footsteps: among many proverbial sayings instructing youth speaks thus: "Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father: and attend that you may know prudence. I will give you a good gift: forsake not my law. For I also was my father's son, tender and as an only son in the sight of my mother: and he taught me and said: 'Let thy heart receive my words: keep my commandments and thou shalt live. Get wisdom, get prudence: forsake her not and she shall keep thee.' " Behold how profitable a lesson the Wise Man delivers to youth and especially to you novices, who have entered the school of God: that by the help of God you may progress in virtues even to old age.

It is also read in the first Book of the Maccha-bees, of Mathathias, a most noble man and a most unyielding defender of the law; that on fire with the zeal of God and powerfully aided by the help of God and men, he drove the wicked and the forsakers of the law of the ancients from his bounds: and according to his strength brought back befittingly the neglected statutes of the early fathers to a holy observance pleasing to God. Who in all his warlike deeds aimed at no other end; but that the honour and worship of God should be most firmly established in the holy laws: and that the desolate people by serving God should enjoy a happy peace; and with sincere hearts should worship God almighty with unbounded exultation: and with joyous voices should praise Him together. He at length, after many glorious deeds of good works, being at the point of death, and anxious with a father's love for the future, lest the good commenced with devout endeavour should perish through sloth; having called to his side his sons and friends who had zeal for God, he strengthens their hearts in most excellent words with many examples of holy men gone before: and earnestly urging and begging them all to perseverance in the good way on which they had entered, he said: "Now, therefore, O my sons, be ye zealous for the law: and give your lives for the covenant of your fathers. And call to remembrance the works of the fathers, which they have done in their generations: and you shall receive great glory and an everlasting name."

Our Saviour also the Lord Jesus Christ, having accomplished the mystery of our redemption by His Passion and cross, after His blessed resurrection appearing frequently to His disciples, among many sacred discourses, whereby He wisely and minutely instructed them: He uttered these parting

and wholesome words. “Go ye,” He said, “into the whole world and preach the gospel to every creature: and teach all nations to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.” O happy and meritorious obedience: which regards nothing else than the eager fulfilment of the good pleasure and will of the heavenly Father. O how holy the soul, which strives to resign itself: and to conform its whole life to the actions of Christ. Truly a most excellent pattern of a good life: Jesus Christ left to us all. He is the master of all: He the book and rule of religious; He the commentary of monks: He the text and glossary of decrees. He is the pattern of life for clerics, the instruction of laymen; the light of the faithful, the joy of the just, the glory of the angels: the end and consummation of all the desires of the saints.

It is also read in the Acts of the Apostles, of most blessed Paul the apostle: that in the beginning of his conversion a heavenly voice said to him: “Arise, and go into the city: and there it shall be told thee what thou must do.” Who immediately arose and obeyed the voice of God; and became a holy and great preacher throughout the world: who before had been a persecutor of the churches. He has shown a pattern of perfect renunciation to all religious: but he has especially left an example of obedience to the newly converted: that they say every hour with Paul, “Lord, what will thou have me to do?” And as then all who had known him were astounded at his sudden conversion: so also now all the wise of the world, wherever Christ be named, wonder and rejoice at his doctrine. Therefore on fire with divine love: he urged all to the love of Christ, saying: “Be followers of me, dearly beloved, as I also am of Christ.” Of whom it is written in the Acts of the Apostles: that he was sent with Barnabas to preach the word of God to the gentiles: and converted many to the faith of Christ. And after some days Paul said again to Barnabas: “Let us return and visit the brethren in all the cities wherein we have preached the word of the Lord, to see how they do: whether they are progressing or failing in their good beginnings.” And again: “But Paul choosing Silas as a suitable companion for the work of preaching, went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches: commanding them to keep the precepts of the apostles and the ancients.”

Lo, brethren, you have now heard many good things, how solicitous the saints were in their day, to teach their children and subjects, to walk in the

holy precepts of God: what examples also of holy conduct they left to their successors: which they themselves had first heard and learnt from the fathers and the ancients. So do you also, dearly beloved, as shoots of olive planted in the house of the Lord, stand in obedience and the discipline of the cloister; hold to the traditions of the elders and the statutes of the General Chapter: drawn up by the Definitors under divine inspiration for your salvation. Receive gratefully the warnings of your superiors: and patiently bear their reproofs: for it is better that they should correct you now: than that the devil hereafter should more grievously punish and mock you. For if now for Christ's sake you humbly yield to the advice of the elders, and forsake your own opinion; then you shall have great peace: and by the grace of Christ you shall receive eternal blessedness. Amen.

SERMON IV

OF HOLDING GOOD DISCOURSES TOGETHER

HERE there are two or three gathered together in My name: there am I in the midst of them, saith the Lord. Give heed, beloved brethren, to the presence of Christ in every place wheresoever you gather together, whether to pray or to labour; neither let one hinder another: or offend by a word or sign of levity. If there, leave given, it be permitted you at times to speak; let your discourse be of God and of devout matters from the holy scriptures: which may edify you in virtue, and comfort you in troubles. Thus did the holy fathers of old in Egypt: when they had come together for counsel and remedies unto the overcoming of temptations. But shun talking about the news of the world and the various conditions of men; nor rashly judge any secular: for God will judge all them that work iniquity. Let it be no interest to you then to think of temporal things, nor to converse about them: but only of spiritual progress in virtues, and the cures for your vices. Leave all exterior things and the business of the house to be ruled by God and arranged by your superiors: who will render an account in the judgement of the things committed to them. Be you contented and grateful for the service daily rendered you, satisfied with your wage in moderate food and clothing: seeking not fanciful things, nor superfluous, nor new, nor soft: but, as good simple sons of God living amid the brethren without complaint and dispute: out of humility think yourselves unworthy of all these blessings. Let your mind be fervent in desires of the heavenly kingdom: and in devout exercises let one strive to outstrip another; and take pleasure in knowing and thinking of nothing but Christ and Him crucified: so that for love and compassion of the Crucified all things of the world and the flesh may be turned into

disgust; and the toil of penance seem short and easy to you: and the discipline of the regular life be changed into sweetness and the joy of a good conscience every day. For then Christ shall be in the midst of you praying and discoursing together; teaching you to despise earthly things and to love the heavenly: and manfully struggle against the temptations of the devil, and curb the passions of the flesh. For wherefore have you come from the world; if not that your whole hope should be in God, and your heart above in heaven? Since therefore you have chosen to renounce the world, and to serve Christ in the cloister: flee worldly men, forsake the friends of the flesh; for they may hinder you in your devotion, and by their speech draw you to hurtful desires: and bring no profit to your soul. The more seldom and the more briefly you speak to men: the safer is it for the guard of your heart and mouth. It is greatly to your honour and the good name of the Order, if out of respect for guests you appear modest and silent in their presence: for you will edify more by your good conduct: than by the polish of your speech. From one unguarded word they impute to you frivolity and indiscretion: and under the religious habit they conclude that a fox is hiding, and pretending to be a sheep.

Let your words therefore be few, profitable and prudent: for an idle word will not pass unpunished with God. To guard against this, silence is to be loved and kept: and therefore was it wholesomely instituted in religion by the holy fathers of old, and by our recent superiors. In fine, in no state or Order will peace and discipline abide: if there be no strictness of silence, the friend of quiet: which is the food of devotion, the closing of contention, the flight of vanity. In silence you may learn: how and to whom you should speak. By idle words the soul becomes dissipated and instable: scarcely able to return to its interior after long mourning and tears. But from godly discourses spring love of God, edification of the neighbour: hatred of the world, desire for the kingdom of Heaven: sorrow for sin, the heat of charity, the bridling of cupidity: and the renewal of the whole inward man in the mirror of the most holy life of our Saviour. For He deigns to be present to those that speak of Him: He is nigh unto all that call upon Him. By holy discourse He arouses the slothful, strengthens the feeble; aids them that fight manfully, crowns the conquerors: terrifies by punishments, exhorts by good examples: comforts by the promise of gifts, rejoices by grace freely bestowed in time: beatifies by the manifestation of the eternal glory of

Heaven, as witnesses the psalmist: "I shall be satisfied," he says, "when Thy glory shall appear." So loving and merciful is Jesus: so sweet and mild is Christ; that if any man prepare a place for Him in his heart, without doubt he will freely show him the light of His grace: and will sup with him. If one is alone and reads or prays: Jesus desires to make a second. If two together read or chant: Jesus wishes to be a third. Nor will be the supplication of these gathered in the name of Jesus, who in good faith humbly and devoutly pray, be void; if, however, in everything which they beseech or desire, they seek His good pleasure, and renounce their own will: saying that most acceptable word of Christ: "Father, not my will: but Thine be ever done. Amen."

SERMON V

OF HAVING PATIENCE AMID THE SLOTHFUL AND PERVERSE

SAY to the faint-hearted: “Take courage, and fear not.” Beloved brethren, be not disturbed if at times some failings, which pain you, are found in religious: or if some depart from the congregation of the good: or if they live with them lukewarmly because of the temptations of the devil: which they suffer daily in the service of God. For these sad assaults of human weakness also befell before our days; as we read of many holy and religious men: who are now honoured by many throughout the world. We are indeed frail, and prone to evil, therefore is it needful that our evil ways be straitened by statutes: and that like wild colts we be fastened to the stake of the holy cross for the Name of Jesus; lest, living according to our own desire, we turn aside from the righteous path of the saints: who entered the kingdom of Heaven by the narrow gate. Let us therefore mutually pray that God may aid and strengthen us in our every trial and temptation: and guard us from the assault and deceit of the enemy, who goes around everywhere seeking whom he may devour; and by what device he may draw a man from the midst of the congregation into the world: and from the world to hell. There there is no redemption, but everlasting horror dwelleth: there the souls seek death and find it not: there they are tormented day and night in fire and brimstone: because here they refused to do a little penance: and spent their time so foolishly and fruitlessly.

Brethren, let us not seek the rest and ease of the flesh like men of the world; but toil and pain for our sins: let us resist vice by often fasting, praying, reading, meditating. Assuredly, we shall not have peace and quiet upon earth, wherever we may be, or wherever also we may go to seek

comfort: or to ease our weariness, or to lessen the burden of our labour: unless we turn ourselves to Christ by prayer and sorrow for sins, with a firm purpose of always doing penance: so that by this light toil and short pain we may be able to escape the torment of everlasting fire. Our peace and the repose of a good life consist in much patience, according to the life of Christ and the examples of the saints; not in a long flight by waterless ways: nor in a vessel passing over the seas. Jonas the Prophet wished to flee from the face of the Lord: he went up into a ship, but it profited him nothing. He gave himself to sleep, he sought repose: but he did not find it. He thought that he was concealed, but God made manifest the hidden one: stirred up a storm, and moved the ocean. Then the sailors rouse up the sleeper, rebuke him and cast him into the water: who, immediately swallowed by a fish as a runaway and as disobedient, is imprisoned in the belly of a whale for his fault. Shut up therefore in this close prison, he cried and prayed to the Lord to be delivered from such great perils of the sea and from the confinement of the fish. At length, however, destitute of all human succour, he recognized in his affliction that it is impossible to escape the hand of God: and that to obey the divine commands is the most assured salvation of the soul. Let us therefore not flee from the toils and hardships that arise in religion for our salvation, of which we knew not before: but let us stand firm, strive manfully, obey readily: pray frequently, toil diligently, keep silence willingly. Let us bear with ourselves patiently for Christ's sake, as all the saints have done: who, having endured things more grievous, now rejoice in Heaven and say; "We have passed through fire and water: and Thou hast brought us out into an eternal refreshment." We live amid many perils: and they, that tempt and trouble us, sleep not nor rest: but seek to ensnare us and to hinder us from the good we have commenced. Let us however not lose heart, nor cease to pray and to cry to Christ: even if we are often lukewarm and dry, and for distress of soul know not what we ought to do: for maybe God proves us in a few things: whether we really love Him not only in words but also in deeds and blows. Therefore when rough winds arise, let us not yield, but set our hands to the oars: let us seize our spiritual weapons, let us lift up our saddened soul, begin anew: and strive to struggle, much more strongly than we have done, against the flesh, against the world and against the devil. For the harder the fight: the more glorious the crown: and the more frequent the annoyance of the sufferer: the more

praiseworthy the virtue of him that is patient. A great hindrance is cowardice of heart, to lose confidence speedily in adversity: to neglect one's holy purpose, to think of the life in the world: to dwell in fancy upon the presence of friends, to think of the agreeableness of comrades; all which things are emptiness and folly: as the swift end of all pleasure and honour shows. Our life, brethren, and religion undertaken for God consist in daily combat: namely, to struggle against bad habits, which everywhere and always, in the choir, in the dormitory, in silence, in labour pursue and tempt us: would that they never overcame us. Therefore it is not wonderful, if sometimes we slip and are wounded: if lightly we offend and are offended, in words, in deeds of our own and of others. We are men, not angels; mortals we are and frail sinners: exiles we are and pilgrims, not citizens of Heaven; inconstant and prone to vice: not yet perfect in grace, or blessed in glory. This thought ought to humble us, not lift up to pride of mind; but by our own weakness to lead us to trust in the divine mercy and loving-kindness: without which we are unable to commence or accomplish anything, witness our Lord, Who saith: "For without Me you can do nothing." For our own weakness very greatly weighs us down: but the divine inspiration and heavenly visitation again raise up them that faint and strengthen unto well-doing: and He lovingly disposes for the profit of our salvation that we may be able to bear whatever unexpected things befall us: and with a just and secret judgement dispenses all things. For He has care of us all: from the beginning of life unto the end of death. For He who made us will not abandon us, if we do not forsake Him: but will make with temptation issue that we may be able to resist and bear its onslaught. Let us say therefore to Him with the holy man in the psalm: when we are attacked by the wicked enemy: "Be Thou my helper, Lord God: forsake me not." And again with all confidence of mind let us cry to Christ in Heaven: "My eyes are ever towards the Lord: for He shall pluck my feet out of the snare." But peace and perfect repose are in Heaven, not on earth: for here all things are in movement and fear and frequent distress. Therefore strong patience is supremely necessary for us in this fragile life: which is naught else but a daily struggle against vice. For whether a man be in his own house or in another, whether among acquaintance or familiar friends: something will speedily befall him which will displease him and disturb the tranquillity of the soul, secure nowhere. Let each then set himself to patience as best he

can: and patiently bear whatever God shall permit: and thus he shall have more ample peace. If he be injured and blamed by anyone: let him overcome his pride, and learn to suffer reproach: and he shall find great favour with God and never-ending glory. Let him grieve that he has sinned and not borne contempt of himself with sufficient patience: and let him humbly crave pardon for all his offences: and God will freely forgive him all.

Beloved brethren, lose not courage, nor add evils to evils: but at once when your conscience accuses you, hasten to the remedy of confession. God is the only one: Whom sin befalls not. For in His angels He found wickedness: and a great portion of them fell from Heaven by pride: because they gave not glory to God for the gifts bestowed upon them. The first man in Paradise was tempted and deceived: and because of the sin of disobedience he was cast out of the place of pleasure into the wretchedness of this world. What wonder then if some weak brother, grievously tempted by the devil and the flesh, or rebuked by many for his failing sometimes errs, and sins, or becomes impatient: when man well established in Paradise fell, where he had so many helps and no hindrances? Many holy and just men in the Old Law were often tempted and persecuted by evil men: but they patiently bore with the wicked: and became better by means of their adversities. At times, however, by the will of God they resisted the wicked; and wrought a just vengeance upon the impious: lest the good weighed down in tribulation should be too much dejected. For some fell overcome by a sudden temptation: others stricken by a long illness, were humbled in their evil deeds: and those whom wealth and honours had uplifted: sorrow and shame brought back to a knowledge of their own weakness. Many also after a grievous fall repenting quickly arose the stronger: and laudibly finished their life in holy ways.

In the days of Christ and His apostles the good were mingled with the bad, in the city, on the road: in the house, in the wilderness. Some believed in Christ and praised His works: others contradicted Him, and complained of Him. Some also, misunderstanding His mystic words, laughed Him to scorn: and because He righteously reproved their vices: they enviously calumniated His true and holy miracles. Even while Christ was discoursing and present there befell among the disciples some anger and quarrel as to which of them should be the greater and first in prelacy and in ruling of the

nascent Church: which He gathered together from divers places and peoples and especially from the poor and simple: whom the loving and lowly Master by word and example recalled to the concord of peace by the way of humility with a gentle reproof, saying: "Unless you be converted and become as little children: you shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven." And again: "And he that will be first among you: shall be the servant of you all." Behold, dearly beloved, by these examples of humility and patience, what are the bases of all virtues; a simple and obedient brother can arrive at the kingdom of Heaven with a secure conscience without many arguments and subtle words: and escape the eternal torments of hell, by patiently bearing all wrongs whatever, unjustly wrought him by the perverse. It is seen, then, from the foregoing that in all places and times of the saints there were good and evil, believers and unbelievers; devout and dissolute, benevolent and perverse, spiritual and carnal; and the good by their patience made daily progress unto better: and the evil vanished like smoke in their wickedness and desires. But God, the Creator of all and the searcher of the ages, from the beginning even to the end, has known how to dispose the causes of each in such manner; that for the good all things work together unto good: and for the wicked all things end in eternal punishment. From which evils now and for ever may the loving and merciful Lord save us, the just judge and patient rewarder: Who is above all God blessed for ever. Amen.

SERMON VI

OF THE NIGHT WATCHES AGAINST THE ASSAULT OF SLEEPINESS

SIMON, sleepest thou? Could you not watch one hour with Me? Watch ye, and pray: that you enter not into temptation. This voice, beloved brethren, is the voice of the heavenly King and our Saviour Jesus Christ: Who urges His soldiers to watch in the camp against the temptations of the devil, the enemy of the human race. What therefore the Lord watchfully addresses to blessed Peter and the other disciples: this also undoubtedly He says to us all. Therefore, when the sacristan comes round at midnight and arouses us: let us be wakeful at once at the sound of the bell: and make ourselves ready by devout prayers to enter the choir: and hasten to meet the heavenly Bridegroom with burning torches. Let us endeavour, dearly beloved, manfully to cast off the sloth of the body: and sleepiness from our eyes. Let us lift up our hands to Heaven, to praise our Creator with joyous voices and pure minds: lest perchance the most cunning enemy prevail against us: and mock at some gaping, others singing but little, others out of tune in their voices. It is a very bad habit of some and it is to be hoped not of many, which I should be ashamed to say; who in the dormitory or in bed lie long awake idly dreaming: and in the church and in choir slumber for lack of devotion. These often harm themselves and others: they neither serve Christ manfully: nor pray faithfully for benefactors and the afflicted. For they offend God seriously, rising slothfully, often coming late: chanting lukewarmly, mispronouncing the words, often yawning, carelessly looking about them: paying little attention, making the inclinations heedlessly, wearying of the length of the psalms, and hastening to the finish. They rejoice at the signal for the refectory, they dread the bell for chapter: they

hasten to a gossip, they enter their cell but slowly: they have little interest in their work, they are eager over dishes well prepared. All these are signs of little devotion, of great ingratitude: and of deep shame. Alas, the fear of God is not before their eyes: nor the love of God in their heart, nor His praise in their mouth: but perfidy in their voice, and luke-warmness in their deed. Where is God, where the angels: where all the saints of God? Where is the superior, where the sacristan, where the cantor; where the lector, where the suscitator? Everything fades away before the eyes of the sleeper. "Awake, ye just, and sin not," says the apostle. ye and pray," saith the Lord: "lest Satan tempt you, idle through want of spirit." For he goeth about day and night seeking whom he may devour: how to deceive the simple, distract the devout: and disturb the peaceful. He is very glad if anyone does not chant, or reads ill: if he closes his eyes and slumbers: if with unguarded eyes he looks about and neglects himself He is speedily at hand to snatch the verse from the mouth of the sleepy: and to throw into his sack the fragments of words. O silly brother of the race of sleepers and of the number of the foolish virgins, whose lamps, we read, went out in the night: if thou dost not fear God, or respect the angels, or feel shame to scandalize thy brethren; why dost thou not dread the devil laying snares for thee, who diligently records in his book all the neglected and imperfect words? For as the holy angels present devout prayers to God, and love and praise them that sing fervently; so Satan with his followers lies in wait for them that pray, to distract and hinder those who sing psalms together in unison: and to have points not a few against them, of which to accuse and punish them. But since thou dost not heed or fear so cruel a thief, so crafty a spy, so severe a creditor, so unsparing an accuser, and harsh executioner, and seldom or but little dost weigh the evils to come and the pains of hell: therefore thou growest weary and dost slumber: and as one dead in the grave dost lie still and silent. There is no toil so heavy, no sorrow so bitter: but that it becomes lighter by comparison with the fire of hell. Alas, what shalt thou do at the moment of death: when the devil runs to meet thee with a terrible countenance and breathing fury? Where then the faithful friends: where the fine banquets and all the honours of the world? Wilt thou escape these terrors: and not fear the demons? Arise, watch, pray: sing, read, toil. Be silent before wrongs, bear injuries, love insults: spurn honours, forgive sinners. Let not the mourning of the damned depart from thy eyes, the

fearful clamour of the demons: the most grievous banishment from the presence of God and the joyous fellowship of the saints. Thou art often afraid seeing the fire of a burning furnace: thou tremblest at thunder and lightning: thou darest storms, and great frosts: and dost scarcely dare to go to sleep and abide in thy cell. Since thou hast heard and read that many have come to an end by a sudden accident and sickness: why dost thou not fear that the like may happen thee? Know that more terrible torments threaten after death. Set in thy mind the things that are naturally dreadful, namely a blazing vessel full of pitch, stinking of sulphur: think of roaring lions, dogs biting, serpents hissing: toads gnawing, dragons devouring: and thou shalt more speedily overcome the vile sins brought thee by the devil to stain thy heart: and thou shalt drive farther from thee sloth of mind, sleepiness of body, and the desire of most empty praise. I tell thee that long vigils, long lessons, the daily Hours, silence, toil, and fast make a short Purgatory: and bring great joy, after the space of three or four hours. It is strange that thou dost so easily feel weariness in the choir chanting or reading: and dost not grow weary with long conversing, or hearing news of the world. Understand that this is the work of the devil: who strives in every way to hinder the divine worship: and to draw thee away from the church and the gathering of them that sing psalms: that he may have a companion to burn for ever in hell. Then they shall yell and howl for exceeding heat and pain: who do not now praise God in heart and mouth with great fervour. If it pleases thee to discourse with a friend for the sake of receiving some relief: how much more oughtest thou to hasten and pant to hear the things of God: to speak with God in hymns and canticles, leaving aside all other cares and fancies. But since facts often move more than words: some examples are to be added at the end of the sermon, for the sake of instruction. Imitate the good which pleases: be on thy guard against the evil which displeases.

AN EXAMPLE

A certain brother began to sleep a little at Matins. Noticing which, the brother seated next to him: quietly cast into his ear just this word: "Hell!" On hearing this, suddenly terrified and awakened: he cast off all drowsiness

from him. Think therefore, slothful one, of hell: and thou wilt not slumber in choir, tired through weariness.

ANOTHER

Another brother also was singing but little, and when his neighbour did not hear his voice: he remonstrated with him that just then Matins were being sung. “Simon, sleepest thou?” And he, aroused by these words, became aware that he was remarked in his drowsiness: and in surprise and shame he was abashed before him that rebuked him.

ANOTHER

There was a certain brother in the Order of Regulars devout to God and well read: an artistic singer, and a zealous lover of the divine praise. He was speaking once familiarly with another brother on the sweetness of the divine chant: and of the solemn office which is performed in the church on the chief festivals. He said therefore to him by way of edification to encourage his weakness: that he might cheerfully sing in choir. “Brother, praise be to God, I have never had weariness in the Divine Office: however long it might be. For on the Feast of Palms, although compared with other days the divine service seems very long: nevertheless I was not weary of the length of the singing: but I felt myself so ready to sing, that if anyone had wished to begin the whole from the beginning again: I should willingly have commenced and chanted with him.” Hearing this, the aforesaid brother was edified: and rendered more eager for the chant. This elder should be well believed; for he was always among the first to come to choir, he seldom went out, if he went out for some need he speedily returned: while there he faithfully helped according to his power, and he did not turn his eyes to other matters.

ANOTHER

Another brother of the same Order, on fire with the zeal of God, struggled hard against drowsiness: and did violence to himself as follows. For weighed down by sleep in choir, he pulled out the hairs of his head with his hand: he roughly rubbed his beard, he pricked his nose with a pen, he made

his eyes smart with spittle: and sometimes he placed under his chin a hard piece of wood, that he might drive away sleep. And when he felt the motions of the flesh, he thought on the flames of the fire of hell: and he sharply tore the skin of his body with his finger nails, and inflicted red wounds on his prurient flesh: until the illicit movement, aroused by the devil, wholly ceased.

SERMON VII

OF GUARDING THE MOUTH AND DILIGENCE IN LABOUR WITH OBEDIENCE TO THE SUPERIOR

A GOOD man out of a good treasure bringeth forth good things. Beloved brethren, you should always have something good concerning God and holy Writ stored up in your heart; and in your external labour repeat the sweet words of Christ: to strengthen you in the burden of your toil. Turn over earnestly the devout psalms and hymns in the silence of your mouth: lest the devil discover you wandering within and idle, unprofitably occupied about the doings of others: for a heart unstable and empty of good thoughts, is the devil's nest. Weigh your words before you speak: lest you utter something foolish which may offend your hearers, and you may grieve to have said: because you have not observed the bounds of discretion. If you do not know how to speak wisely; strive nevertheless to hold your peace with humility and modesty: according to that of Solomon: "A fool, if he will hold his peace: shall be accounted wise."

Time is given to work well, not to idle: nor to gossip; nor to jest. Suffer not then any time to pass away without the fruit of good work: for if you have permission to speak: you have not however to utter anything useless. For as you are to render an account before God in the judgement of every idle word: so also of every time and moment ill or carelessly spent. But according to the different seasons and feasts by day and night exercises suited to the time should be taken up: and good purposes should be more fervently enkindled. Nevertheless for the good of obedience and the service of brotherly charity, all private matters should be neglected: nor is any

singular practice of devotion to be preferred to holy obedience and the common profit. For thus Christ left the Temple and the doctors of the Law; and obeyed His Mother and Joseph like a good son subject to his parents: as an example for all religious. He who exercises himself well in this, and daily strives and labours to overcome himself: he will be most gloriously crowned because he hath striven lawfully. For all good works performed out of simple obedience for God's sake, are most pleasing to God: and worthy of a very great reward to be for ever crowned in Heaven. For the renunciation of our own will with true humility of heart subject to the prelate and the advice of the superior: surpasses all temporal gain and arguments of utility, and is resplendent with everlasting praise. For as nothing is more precious than a good will, nor more at rest than free submission: so nothing is more vile than self will with the swelling of pride. Hence Solomon saith in praise of obedience. "An obedient man shall speak of victory." It is a great struggle to overcome oneself: a noble triumph to bow the neck of pride; to leave one's own opinion, to lay aside one's own wisdom: and in nothing to wish to show oneself. Every man who freely obeys for God's sake, does the work of a mighty warrior; because he fights against himself: and slays the motions of his own will with the sword of the fear of God. And so he shall receive a crown of everlasting glory with the martyrs: because he has manfully struggled and conquered. Whoever therefore humbly obeys a superior, or even an inferior, and willingly submits his opinion to the opinion of another: he loses nothing, but yielding to the other, gains the more. Every man who thus overcomes and humbles himself: treads upon the head of proud Lucifer, who suggests things contrary to humility: that a man give not way to another, but turn himself to cunning arguments. Why this? Lest keeping silence, he be lowered outwardly, and seem as a fool or an ignoramus: because he knows not how to defend himself, or suffers himself to be vanquished. Alas pride, how blind and foolish always: how far thou wanderest from the kingdom of God: and rushest headlong to the gates of hell. O what good and praiseworthy things have been said of thee, holy humility, always ready to obey; for to thee are opened the portals of Heaven: to see the glorious countenance of Jesus Christ. Let it not then be burdensome to anyone, nor seem unworthy to obey man for God's sake in things lawful and righteous: while Christ has been made obedient even to the shame of the cross. Truly,

brethren, if a man will obey and serve a brother for God's sake, he shows God the greatest honour in his submission: and in the end he shall have Christ as the recompense of his labour and the rewarder of his holy subjection speaking thus: "What you did to one of these My least brethren: you did to me." For without obedience and brotherly love: our works are either little, or nothing. But with humble obedience: even worthless and small services rendered a brother please God. A truly and perfectly obedient man does not tarry when called: he does not excuse himself when busy or wearied: for he fears to incur the displeasure of God: if he follow not the voice of him that commands according to his power. Whether therefore the obedient man toils or prays, whether he reads or writes: whether he is silent or speaks, whether he watches or rests, whether he eats, or fasts: all things are accounted to him unto good from the merit of holy obedience. For in performing or in leaving all his acts he merits equally well, if he fully resign himself within: if herein he truly seek and aim at the good pleasure and honour of God. And he progresses the more fully and is the more acceptably pleasing to God; the more quickly and readily he fulfills: that which the will of the superior declares should be done. And if he knew better and the precept were more clearly made manifest to him: without any wavering, he should show himself most prompt to obey God and His vicar. Therefore the truly obedient man is always joyful, and has great trust in God; Whose will He desires to accomplish at all times: from Whom he doubts not he will receive a never-ending reward with the elect, singing in heart and mouth: "My heart is ready, O God: my heart is ready." And again. "I am ready and am not troubled: that I may keep Thy commandments."

SERMON VIII

OF SHUNNING VAINGLORY, AND THAT PRAISE IS TO BE RENDERED TO GOD ALONE

SO let your light shine before men that they may see your good works: and glorify your Father Who is in Heaven. Beloved brethren, when you do any good, be not lifted up, do not vainly boast; but humble your heart before God: lest on account of vainglory and self complacency you lose heavenly glory and the reward eternal. Every good action is to be attributed to God: not to your industry or power. Strive to wish to please God alone: and to give good example to the neighbour, in the observance of the regular discipline; lest the devil find whereby to grievously accuse you: and urge that you are like to sepulchres whitened without. Of what profit the vain praise of men; when within an evil conscience accuses of sins? The proud man and ambitious of temporal glory has toil without fruit: and unless he speedily repent and deeply humble himself: he will heap up a sum of greater punishment. Outside the charity of God and the neighbour the works praised by men are of no avail; but they are as empty vessels having no oil: and as lamps giving no light in the dark. Certainly they are the foolish virgins: who for any good work or word seek the praises of men. But they are the wise, who stand in fear, and guard in true humility the little good which they do: all likewise that they know and understand, and bring to effect, or purpose to make better: this they attribute with truth to God, the giver of all good things. Otherwise they are thieves and robbers: thieves because they unlawfully usurp the glory and honour of God; robbers

because by vainly boasting they wound their own soul: and by taking pride they destroy the grace of God.

Who is just and prudent? He who has God ever before his eyes; who always thinks on good things: always speaks good things: always does good things, while he lives and is able. Do not, brethren, take pride from this that you know and read much: or because you have been long in the way of God and in religion. You should rather grieve that you have made so little progress in virtues: and would that you had still the first-fruits of the sweetness of a beginner, and so felt. However, you must not lose heart, or cease from your good endeavours: but with all humility beseech the divine assistance: that God deign to inspire you with fresh fervour. For as long as a man dwells in the present condition, he is instable, and liable to fall from good to evil: and on the other hand he is capable of being brought back from evil to good. Whence the wise king Solomon saith: “There is no just man upon earth: that doth good, and sinneth not.” And blessed John, the most beloved disciple of Jesus, says in his epistle: that no man may vainly glory in his justice and purity. “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves: and the truth is not in us.” Let no man therefore excuse himself as if he were blameless, and clear of fault: for in many things we all offend, saith blessed James the Apostle. For either knowingly a man sins, or unknowingly: either willingly or unwillingly, either from weakness, or from a perverse will: either from fear or from love, either from despair or presumption: either from frivolity of mind, or from habit, or from lukewarmness; either drawn by company, or puffed up by singularity: either stirred by anger, or carried away by concupiscence. By these passions and various desires, as by contrary winds, the heart of man is often moved and disturbed: and because of these storms of the world, very seldom does a man attain the harbour of repose. For there is scarcely a day or a night, an hour or an interval so brief and good: but in something a man errs or grows lukewarm, or commits negligences. For all which it behoves to pray without ceasing; that the loving God may mercifully forgive us all our evils: of which we have been guilty in word or deed or thought. And because no man is free from stain; therefore with humility and sorrow of heart speedy recourse must be had to the remedy of confession: and with greater watchfulness care be taken for the future against every occasion of evil thoughts. It behoves a man to strive to guard against evil in the beginning,

lest the wily serpent find a small opening: and at length violently thrust in his whole head and tail. The heart of man cannot rest; but it is occupied either in good or in evil: as frequent experience teaches. And as much as a man loves good and pursues virtue: so much he hates evil and detests vice: because contraries cannot dwell together in one home. But no man shall find repose of heart whatever he may have or desire; unless he seek and hold in enjoyment God the true and supreme good: and use temporal things with moderation unto meriting the eternal kingdom of God.

Therefore, brethren, seek Christ in humility now: that hereafter you may see Him in His majesty. Seek now His grace by prayers with unfeigned tears: that cleansed from all stains, you may be worthy to see His face in Heaven. Seek now Christ in the law and the prophets concealed under figures: that hereafter you may know all the secrets of the scriptures perfectly without books and masters: as it is said by the apostle Paul: “We see now through a glass in a dark manner: but then face to face.”

But to possess the supreme good with the elect of God, who can be meet and worthy? Assuredly the truly humble, the perfectly obedient, mild and patient: grieving much for sins, strongly resisting vice: spurning the glory of the world, accounting himself nothing; seldom in things exterior, assiduous in interior: cold towards the things of earth, on fire for the things of Heaven: gentle to bear with others, vigorous in chastising self: easy to forgive, difficult to provoke: anxious every hour to watch over his heart: slow to go outside, joyful of soul to abide at home. Blessed he who turns over these things in his mind: and most speedily returns to his interior. Blessed he who suffers nothing temporal, nothing carnal, nothing impure, nothing swollen to enter the sanctuary of his heart: nor permits the like to tarry there. Blessed he who knows many good things and does what he says; for now he has great peace: and hereafter with Christ he shall equally obtain a more blessed glory. Which may He deign to bestow upon us with all His saints: Who is above all God, blessed for ever. Amen.

SERMON IX

OF THE RISK OF MANY EVILS FROM MUCH BANDYING OF WORDS

DO not multiply to speak lofty things boasting. Beloved brethren, hold this verse firmly in your mind, and beware of speaking of sublime matters; lest the devil tempt you to vainglory: and you lose your time given you for devotion and compunction. It would be more expedient for many that they thought of the pains of Hell and the fire of Purgatory: rather than of the breadth of the world and the height of Heaven. For to think and speak of the awful judgement to come and of the punishments of the reprobate: often strikes fear, which is very profitable for the lukewarm and dissolute. But to speak of the empyreal heaven and of the nine choirs of angels, does not profit young and unmortified monks: who are easily uplifted, when they read or hear any subtle matters: it were better they were silent of these things, and examined and mourned their own shortcomings.

Brethren, then you do truly wisely if you know your own vices: and bitterly repent of all the evils which you have done. Alas, how much good you lose every hour idling and talking: which you might gain by toiling, keeping silence and praying. Purpose strongly therefore to amend and make fervent progress: and persevere with constancy in the Order. Lift up your eyes very often with humble prayer to the Lord in Heaven, groaning: and praying for your sins in the secret of your heart. Such God loves: who often lift up their hearts to heavenly things and pray. He freely forgives your past faults if you crave pardon: and seek and keep His grace. Never foolishly think great and high things of yourselves: lest you fall before you know it.

When, therefore, you think or say or do anything good: you must not attribute this to yourselves even in the least; but immediately strive to return

it all, with giving of thanks, wholly to God: from Whom comes all the good that you recognize in yourselves, and see in others. All things are the gifts of God, which beautify the body and soul: for God has given being, life, feeling, action, discernment and understanding. It is a great blindness of heart, not to consider the divine gifts: and how much we are obliged to thank the Creator. So great are the blessings of God that they cannot be numbered: or sufficiently unfolded. Grievously, therefore, they sin and displease God by ingratitude: who, entangled in vanities, do not render to God devout thanks for His favours. Whence the apostle Paul saith: "Give thanks always for all things: in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." And David singing on the Psaltery and harp: after many favours bestowed, rendering thanks to God, says: "Unto Thee, O my helper, will I sing; for Thou art God my defence: my God, my mercy." And the same Lord speaks by Isaias the prophet, saying: "I will not give My glory to another." What then shall we say to this, who do little or no good: and nevertheless desire to glory and to be praised? A base thing utterly: to wish to be esteemed for virtues which we do not possess. Let us abandon this vanity: let us follow the holy apostles and prophets, who were truly saints: and nevertheless attributed nothing of their holiness to themselves but all to God.

When, therefore, we seek the honour and glory of God, and render thanks to Him simply and wholly for all good things bestowed upon us; then we rise above with the angels in Heaven: who at the birth of Christ sang glory to God in the highest. But when we seek empty glory without of any good, or take pleasure in ourselves within, and weigh our good more than we should; then we are not truthful, nor humble in the truth, but proud and foolish: despised of God, reprobate of the angels, and strangers to all the saints. Whence from the vice of elation we fall beneath ourselves, and by degrees approach Hell; because we are likened to the demons and the damned, who do not love or praise God: nor are able to gaze upon the glory of God. And because they do not pay the honour due to God nor freely humble themselves with the saints; but perversely and proudly resist their Creator: by a just judgement of God they carry the torment of hell everywhere with them, and wither away in their malice. They are burnt by the flames, and not cleansed: they are most cruelly tortured, and never amend. From the moment they sought glory in themselves, they lost Heaven: and fell from the eternal glory of God into everlasting shame.

Thus, alas, poor wretches, proud men glorying in themselves and despising others, shall speedily perish, before they are aware: who presuming of themselves say or think: “Our mighty hand: and not the Lord, hath done all these things.” Be therefore, brethren, humble of heart, chaste, kind, modest, compassionate: prudent in word, diligent in toil: fervent in prayer, patient in tribulation: obedient without delay, simple without questioning: retiring without pretence, silent without suspicion: submissive without complaint.

When also God of His great loving-kindness inspires or reveals anything good to one in prayer or study: let him not at once extol himself for this, nor prefer himself to others, or deem himself more holy; but he must think and believe that God hath done this to him not on account of his own virtues and labours, nor on account of his merits and ingenious toil: but because of His immense goodness, whereby He sends down rain upon the good and the bad, pouring forth His mercy upon every creature. For thus he speaks by the prophet Ezechiel to the Jews taking pride in the good things vouchsafed them: “It is not for your sakes but for My own sake that I have done this, House of Israel: be it known to you.” Let no man then abuse the divine goodness and mercy upon him by attributing anything to himself through pride: for fear that he incur at once the displeasure of God because of his thanklessness: and hear against himself the harsh sentence of the judge fearfully thundering: “Take away the pound from him, that is, the grace of devotion of which he is unworthy because of vainglory: and give to him that hath ten pounds, on account of his humility and thankfulness.” For he is meet to receive greater gifts; who studies ever to return thanks to God for the lesser: and confesses himself unworthy of all. The most loving Lord often gives His consolation not only for the sake of one man or two comforting one another; but also for the sake of the edification of others, and the instruction of many to the love and praise of so pious, sweet and generous a Master in His gifts: Who is so good and beneficent in bestowing His grace upon the humble, the mild and the compunct of heart. But He soon withdraws His sweetness from the elated and thankless: from idle talkers, from the curious, from the deceitful and murmurers. For the heart must be free of vices, if the sweetness of the Holy Spirit is to enter: which is more precious than all earthly riches. And he shall be enriched with eternal good things in Heaven: who spurns to take pleasure in the praises of men. Seek, therefore, rather to be comforted in devout prayers and tears: than in

deep questions and long discourses. Study in the book of the conscience: flee the shadow of vainglory: store up oil in your vessels with the wise virgins: hide the treasure of your heart in the valley of humility. For if you seek the summit of true honour: you will hasten to that heavenly fatherland with your whole desire. To the happy gaining of which: may Jesus Christ lead us all. Amen.

PART II

SERMON X

OF THE MANY TRIALS OF THE JUST FOR THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

MANY are the tribulations of the just: and out of them all will the Lord deliver them. Beloved brethren, look into the life of the saints; eagerly hear and read the teaching of the saints: desire to follow their examples; and constantly implore their glorious intercession, that you may be strong in adversity: and may be able to bear with constancy for Christ all the toils of the day and the night. Doubt not of the future promise of Christ: which He will render to them that love Him, when their work is accomplished and their combat bravely ended. You have not been in Hell nor in Lucifer's pit: therefore the statutes of the cloister seem burdensome to you. You have not experienced the fire of Purgatory: therefore you dread to bear the word of reproach, the strictness of silence, the hardness of your couch, the severity of the fast, the coarseness of the food: the fatigue of singing and the frequency of prayer. If you would have all things according to your fancy; what do you merit thereby before God? This is not in agreement with the saints: who suffered most grievous afflictions for many years. Consider then in your small labours and distresses, the most bitter sufferings of the martyrs; and by true virtue imitate the combat of those: whose festivals you celebrate through the year. And when you feel any trial, take up the buckler of patience: lest you fail in religion before the time for the end of the struggle. Let it not scandalize thee, if the wicked flourish in the world, and the good groan under the yoke; if the perverse rejoice in honours: and the good are deprived of necessities and friends. God merciful and just provides better and everlasting goods for His elect, to be bestowed hereafter; whom now He strikes and chastises in divers ways by means of

the wicked: that they may be made the more worthy to receive greater rewards in the heavenly kingdoms. Many therefore are the tribulations of the just: but many also are the scourges of sinners, which are the commencement of future sorrows. And who shall be able fully to ponder and fathom the abyss of the judgements of God upon the sons of men? For the Lord is just and hath loved justice; Who to the good and righteous of heart ordains all things unto good and turns all to their salvation: and to the wicked, hard, and perverse changes all unto their destruction and grief. Bear therefore, brethren, as good and faithful servants of Christ, with patient heart and willing soul, the small burdens which at times trouble you and prove how strong you are; for they will not last long nor confound the humble: but borne devoutly they will greatly rejoice your souls according to that of the Psalmist: "The bones that have been humbled shall rejoice: and He will save the humble of spirit." If we were truly humble and willing to balance strictly the weight of our sins; we should find nothing unbearable: we should say that we scarcely receive one for a thousand. For it behoved Christ to suffer, Who nevertheless did no sin: how much more us, miserable sinners, who daily in many things offend many: namely, God, the angels, the saints, and men. But God suffers many tribulations to fall upon His elect not to their reprobation; but for the cleansing of sins, for the increase of merits, for a greater warning: and for the strengthening of their weakness by the virtue of patience.

Let each then set himself to patience, if he will have peace of heart: if he wishes to receive a crown of glory in Heaven, after the toil of his combat. This temporal life is full of stones and thorns; and therein the elect are exercised and tried by hardships: that they may the more eagerly long for the eternal goods. Behold God spares no man; but gives to each his own burden to bear: that he may have occasion to merit much. For some things come and tempt us on the right by flattery: others on the left by blame; some meet us in face with a harsh countenance: others pierce us behind by the bite of detraction; some constrain us from above to labour: others froth up from below to ridicule, as the little boys with the holy Elisaeus. By these six winds the condition of the present life is buffeted: and every Christian assaulted whether religious or secular. Neither rich man nor poor, neither whole nor sickly: is without his burden. Each has enough to bear; and he who makes ready and bends his back for it: does wisely and will carry it

more easily. But he who seeks to idle and amuse himself with gossip; and wander through the offices and the meadows: he shall fall among robbers and fierce dogs; that is, on various temptations of the flesh, which destroy the grace of devotion: and pierce the conscience with many wounds.

Thus is a professed religious in the cloister: as a noble warrior in camp surrounded on all sides by the enemy. He cannot fly, he cannot give way to idleness: but he must watch and stand ever to arms against the snares and arrows of his foes. For unless the soldier of Christ be girded with the girdle of chastity and defended on all sides by the shield of patience: speedily he is either disturbed, or cast down, or wounded. Stand therefore in the fear of God and prepare yourselves to fight against your passions and the vexations of men and wicked tongues; for you will always have some adversary, now this one, now that: according as God suffers to humble you lest you grow proud in good: and by vainglory lose all. But if you bear with your adversaries humbly and patiently; you shall be acceptable to God, and made like to the holy martyrs in suffering: and in the heavenly kingdom most glorious and sublime. It is utterly necessary that humility go before glory: and patience make ready with many blows the crown for the victors. For without patience and struggle and toil: vain is the hope of heavenly reward. Put you on therefore, beloved brethren, as blessed Paul saith, the breastplate of faith, doubting not of the help of God: recalling amid distresses for your supreme comfort the divine promises: and place your whole hope in God and not in men; for men often deceive and are deceived in their opinions and devices: they meditate vain things and speak foolish; they look not to the future judgements: nor fear God as they should.

Be especially on your guard against passionate men and deceitful, against dissolute and jesting companions; lest you learn to gossip and laugh with the frivolous: who walk by pleasant ways to evil hospices. But let your conversation be with the simple and humble, with the meek and devout; that from them you may receive spiritual consolation: and make more and more progress in virtue. Patience and fortitude are exceedingly necessary to you: who are in religion and stand under obedience. And so obey with a willing soul and a full heart: and strive to follow the good advice of seniors: although at times the things which they command seem hard and base. As therefore from every side assaults threaten to attack your weakness; so there are very great rewards set in the right hand of God: to be rendered to you

for your much patience in all your tribulations. Encourage yourselves therefore to bear all: and cast not away the burdens which merit everlasting joys.

For from superiors it behoves you often to endure correction for your excesses: because it is better to be purged here than hereafter. But also it is most safe to obey their commands for God's sake: if you will be most happily crowned with the elect. Submit yourselves therefore freely to their ordering; that they may guide you by a safer way and a shorter distance amid so many foes and perils: to the harbour of salvation, without a murmur or any sinister suspicion.

From inferiors it behoves you to bear their defects both of conduct and of body, the which is a work of piety; and sometimes to suffer also derision: which is a sign of mildness.

On the right it behoves you to take careful heed lest you be beguiled by flattery and vain praise; lest you deem yourselves holy and just: or lift your hearts above that which is said. Often empty praise harms: soft words deceive light souls: as the snarer sweetly discoursing on his flute beguiles and captures the birds. Therefore seek not but shun honour or praise from men: lest you lose the full reward with God for foolish fables. Many praise to the face: behind the back they relate defects. He who looks into his own conscience: does not value or desire the praises of men.

On the left it behoves you to exercise great caution; that you be not troubled by those, who blame your actions, scoffing, denouncing, and giving an evil sense to the good: that you be not impatient in heart, or answer harshly in words; because perchance they wish to prove you by reproaches: whether you are truly humble and patient in adversity.

From in front it behoves you to consider with whom you speak, with whom you stand and walk: of what manner are your neighbours and comrades in their conduct, words and actions: lest haply you be seduced and infected by bad example through dissipation and licence most harmful to the young. For often after light jesting there comes the sorrow of a saddened conscience: according to the proverb of Solomon: "Mourning taketh hold of the end of joy: and laughter shall be mingled with sorrow." You must not believe every word: nor soon carry further what you have heard. For all things are not edifying: nor is it expedient to know the secrets of others. Often lies are narrated as true: which things draw the hearers

away from heavenly desires. Refrain then from trifles and jests, which hinder godly pursuits; dull the understanding, distract the memory: and disturb the peaceful with unfounded suspicions.

From behind it behoves you also to keep a watchful eye; and to think not a little beforehand of perils to come: to wit, what trials might befall you through those whom now you hold as your friends. Make ready then your back to bear every issue of ill; to wash away past sins; to shun present amusements: and to lessen the future pains of Purgatory. For the reproaches, detractions, accusations and ridicule of men patiently received: are an excellent medicine for the health of the soul: justly inflicted by a most just God on sinners. The sharp reproof of words then will not harm if you are well-disposed and guiltless: for a harsh word is profitable for the correction of the dissipated.

You have now heard from the above in how many dangerous combats you are engaged, and what great good you may merit if you fight manfully. Be not therefore slack, nor lose courage because of the multitude of the enemy: but with religious anxiety strive ever to make progress unto better and more fervent practice; so that by longanimity and patience in virtues and many labours you may attain eternal repose, safe from all evils: when our Lord Jesus Christ shall bestow upon you through the intercession of His holy martyrs the crown of eternal life you have long desired. Amen.

SERMON XI

OF THE DAILY MARTYRDOM AND WARFARE IN THE RELIGIOUS STATE

BECAUSE for Thy sake we are killed all the day long: we are counted as sheep for the slaughter. Beloved brother, note well these words just read in your hearing: which long before your birth were most wholesomely uttered for your instruction by the prophet in the psalm. Blessed be God Who has called you from the present wicked world in which many are endangered soul and body: pursuing the desires of the flesh and fleeting honours. See your vocation then to this Congregation prepared by God: wherein you can merit in a short time with little labour life eternal. Behold you have entered religion, you have freely renounced your own; and in a certain manner you are dead to the world: or you should deem yourselves as dead and buried. For this your habit shows without, and the report has gone abroad of you: that you are not of the world, but all sons of God on high. For men in the world often say of religious persons: “He who serves God mocks the whole world: and he does very wisely. He assures himself of Heaven: and he has no fear of hell.” Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth: lest the envy of the devil again entice you; and drag you with him to eternal punishment through the softness of the flesh. It is certainly a great toil to struggle daily against passions and vices: but rewards exceeding great are promised to them that overcome. Think over the words which are so heartily sung in our church of the holy martyrs for their praise and as a memorial to obtain their suffrages: the sweetness of which ought to touch the depths of our heart: and arouse our lukewarmness to bear for Christ at least a few contradictions. For thus do we often recite at Vespers: “The saints of God had a mighty conflict: they passed through fire and water, and

they have been saved.” O beloved brethren, who stand in religion under obedience: if you faithfully fulfill what you have vowed, you are martyrs: and still you can become so by daily suffering. For so often shall you receive new crowns and precious jewels for your combat: as often as you present the different members of your body to daily labours for Christ. And if you abandon your own will, and strongly resist your sensuality: you shall receive great consolation from God within. Every religious living in obedience ready to crush his own will, and humbly endeavouring to obey his superior: he truly becomes a martyr in spirit: although he be not struck on the neck with the material sword. And whoever gives himself to perfect mortification the whole day, that is, the whole time of his life, obeying from a simple heart, he imitates Abraham: who refused not to offer as a holocaust, to bind and to slay his only beloved son Isaac. We read also of the holy martyrs that by divers kinds of torments they attained the kingdom of Heaven: who did not choose according to their own liking what species of torture or death they should suffer; but they committed themselves utterly to the divine ordering: they presented with constancy body and soul to their Creator to endure all things. When therefore any of you hears a command distasteful to him imposed by the superior, and nevertheless is ready to obey: if then also he strives to do himself violence, and restrains and stifles the rising complaint; then he offers a most agreeable sacrifice to God on the altar of his heart: and with the martyrs being made victorious over himself gloriously triumphs over the enemy. For many martyrs were violently dragged to prison, and there were bound with most cruel iron chains: yea, also were abandoned to lie without food and drink, without light and any solace from man, in filth and the fear of death. And nevertheless they remained constant in the faith of Christ, and strove to give thanks to God in their pains: for that they merited to suffer reproaches and torments for His name. Looking upon these examples do not give way in adversities, and complain of too great poverty: nor because of the severity of discipline flee from the battle before the end of the victory. They worthily merit to be crowned: who lawfully struggle and persevere. Most light is all the fatigue of our penance in comparison of the sufferings and abstinence of the holy martyrs: and in consideration of the pains of hell.

You have often heard in the torments of the martyrs, that they were tortured in divers members: and after most grievous pains were deprived of

the same members, then given to most ferocious beasts to be devoured: or even thrown into burning flames. You have not yet, brethren, experienced these things: you have not yet been thus tried or proved: not yet thus tortured and beaten: not yet thus derided, or filled with reproaches: not yet driven from your houses in nakedness and shame, and publicly dragged through the streets. You have not yet resisted temptations unto the shedding of blood: nor suffered a hand or a foot to be cut off for faith and chastity. But if you often faint in the very small sufferings for Christ which befall in religion: how could you bear greater in persecution? For there are many things wherein you can try your fortitude although you shed not blood: nor resist even to the mutilation of your limbs. The holy martyrs presented their members to most grievous torments: you must chastise your body in many fastings and watches, in silence and toil, lest it grow insolent. For he who receives and endures every bitter for sweet, every coarseness for beauty, every sorrow for joy: this one truly drinks the chalice of the Lord with the martyrs; and in the sufferings to come he shall not fear to be burned: but he shall supremely rejoice to be associated in the choirs of the saints. You must choose one of these: either to burn for ever with the demons for small pleasures: or for a slight abstinence, enjoy everlasting glory with the holy angels. And because the martyrs had in mind the never-ending torments: therefore they bore easily transitory evils: and preferred to enter by the narrow way to the broad realms of Heaven. Every one in the Order living religiously and devoutly in his state, can gain the palm of martyrdom: if he struggles bravely against his vices, if he prays for his adversaries and detractors: if he earnestly keeps his chastity unspotted: if he observes obedience even unto death after the example of Christ: if he always desires to have rather less than more of all earthly things and of the necessities of this life: if in all he seeks the good pleasure of God and forsakes his own will. holy voluntary poverty is reckoned as a martyrdom: and therefore as to martyrs so also to the poor the kingdom of Heaven is promised and given by the Lord. When therefore silence is enjoined on one talkative and dissolute, that he speak not to outsiders or to a brother; then the tongue prone to gossip is bound as by a cord: and curbed in silence that it harm not another. And indeed it is better for many that are wordy modestly to keep silence for peace of conscience: rather than from here and there piece together stories of life in the world. And when to a restless man word is

given to remain in the cloister, or to dwell quietly in his cell: then his feet by a pious violence are set as it were in the stocks; and thus the fickle heart is compelled to return to the way of salvation: according to that word of the Lord: "Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city: and compel them to come in." Alas, how many by wandering abroad have perished: how many obeying their curiosity have added nothing to their holiness. O how many have been brought back by the rod of the superior to the keeping of their conscience and a good life: and have made a virtue of necessity. When the curious man closes his eyes, that he may not behold the vanities of the world: then he receives a reward with the saints: whose eyes were blinded by tyrants. When an idler is forced to toil: then he is dragged by hands and feet to the place of martyrdom; and if he obeys in all that is enjoined him: he shall be recompensed with the martyrs whose hands were fettered with chains, and whose feet were hung in the rack. The good obedient brother then ought to reflect that he has not command over his own body, but the superior: to whom he has freely resigned himself for God's sake: to go and do what he shall order for the salvation of his soul. For thus shall he gain the palm of patience with the martyrs: and the crown of life eternal. By the gift of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who reigneth for ever and ever. Amen.

SERMON XII

OF THE WISDOM OF CONFESSORS AND THE CONTINENCE OF RELIGIOUS

THE mouth of the just shall meditate wisdom: and his tongue shall speak judgement. Beloved brethren, these words are wont to be chanted of Confessors and Doctors: whom we ought to honour with a special devotion, and earnestly implore their suffrages: that strenuously imitating their virtues, we may merit after the course of the present life is accomplished to attain their fellowship. Therefore if we cannot bear most grievous and varied kinds of tortures with the holy martyrs; let us endeavour in the measure of our strength to live in holy religion, humbly, patiently, and continently with the Confessors and Hermits: as they also pleased God, macerating the flesh by many long watchings and fasts. For the prophet in the verse of the psalm quoted describes, what is the manner of life of the just man who is pleasing to God: and how happy is his end, who shall have remained steadfast in his holy purpose. For the life of the just man and the good religious is usually remarked, and especially praised for certain characteristics; to wit, that he have his mouth shut against evil, his tongue learned in good: his heart at rest from disturbance, devout in prayer, suspended in contemplation: that he do good work with a right intention towards God: and that he be without evil suspicion towards his neighbour. And who desires to have these things, let him set the law of God in his heart: let him often meditate, willingly hear and read the sacred words: but of worldly things be silent, only of those things that belong to the salvation of the soul take the fullest care: cast away anxieties that do not concern him, indulge no time in idleness; but either pray, or study, or toil: that thereby he may be able as a faithful servant daily to increase the talent of good work.

Let him learn before he teaches; and choose rather to be silent than to speak: if he wishes to become wise. Let his words be few and profitable: let him utter each with modesty: let him shun appearing before the great: let him arrange all his actions and discourses with the fear of God: as to be judged by Him, if he offend in aught. It is safer therefore and better that a man hold his peace: who knows not how to speak duly. If any inexperienced desire to have divine wisdom, let him spurn the delights of the flesh, let him keep strict watch over his outward senses, lest he drink in the vanities of the world: let him turn himself to inner things, let him examine his shortcomings: let him search his conscience every day, lament his guilt, leave naught unpunished; sigh for the things of Heaven, fear the judgement to come: deem the present life a prison, feel it a penalty to be away from Christ; consider it a great sorrow not to be assisting in the choirs of the saints: covet to possess nothing in this world, that he may have a heart ever free: esteem all temporal joy mourning: and for the desire of eternity reckon all plenty of goods poverty. The dissipated and talkative man knows not these interior sentiments: and he who ambitions honours: shall never find true wisdom. Blessed therefore that religious in whose heart the law of God reposes: whose mouth meditates the wisdom of the saints, not the folly of the world: whose learned tongue treats right judgement in every case, lest it utter anything in vain as to the wind; whose good works ever aim at the good-pleasure of God: whose steps within and without are ever directed in accordance with the divine teaching. It belongs therefore to a wise and spiritual man to discern the true from the false: vice from virtue, the necessary from the superfluous, the honourable from the scandalous: the bright from the dark, the expedient from the unlawful, the private from the public: the twisted from the upright, the just from the perverse, and the simple from the cunning: the innocent from the feigned and deceitful. Whence the Lord by the prophet Jeremias says in praise of the just man: "If thou shalt separate the precious from the vile: thou shalt be as My mouth." God is truthful and just, and He hath loved justice: His countenance hath beheld righteousness. And therefore He seeks and loves such: as walk before Him in truth. Their steps shall not be supplanted by the adversary the devil; nor by the flatteries of the world, nor by their own concupiscences: nor are they seduced by the praise or the blame of others. For the right hand of God guards under His wing them that walk in simplicity of heart: and all

that they say and do shall profit them unto very great merit, and an everlasting reward. Which when they have happily attained: there will be naught for them to desire further. For blessed are all, who shall be worthy to be present in the kingdom of God and to feast and rejoice with Christ; for that they have loved Christ in their life: and have reckoned as base all earthly things.

Beloved brethren, imitate the humble life of Jesus Christ, as also did the holy Confessors: among whom were many noble and wealthy men, who long led a life truly godly and austere in abstinence from meats, in want of wheat, wine and oil and other pleasant foods: crucifying their weak flesh with its vices and concupiscences, not for the sake of the praise of men: but to satisfy unto God for their sins by fervent penance. These striving against the temptations of the devil and the honours of the world unto death: at length accomplished the course of their life in a happy end. Although therefore these did not endure in their body the sword of tyrants, or burning fire, or the tearing of beasts, or other dreadful torments: nevertheless they waged a most mighty warfare and a daily martyrdom in their spirit; embracing in preference to all the treasures of the world a life chaste, humble, lowly, interior, devout, kind, patient, sober, modest, poor and hidden: and therefore they worthily merited to have eternal crowns. If therefore you seek true wisdom, and desire to possess a peaceful life pleasing to God and agreeable to men, then give yourselves to true humility of heart, as it is written: "Where humility is: there is wisdom." This wisdom the world hates, the devil attacks; the flesh abhors, the fool derides: the proud man spurns, the passionate persecutes. For a humble and chaste life is more pleasing to God: than deep knowledge: and a good and pure conscience is more to be desired: than subtle and wordy eloquence. Simple obedience also is much better: than a clever excuse of the mouth. The keeping of silence is more profitable: than extorted permission to speak. For God protects the simply obedient: and He often suffers the cunning to come to a foolish end. It is no small prudence, to give heed to oneself: and to humble oneself under every creature: for God humbled Himself for man even to the lowest degree of earth, that He might convert sinners: and draw the penitent by true humility to the heights of Heaven, and make them blessed for ever. Many learned philosophers and great in their own eyes, have neglected the path of saving prudence, or have not known it: and

departing from the humility of Christ have wandered from the truth: and have hardly been able to attain contempt of the world. Many masters also drawing the science of God and the knowledge of the virtues from long study, preach excellently well of humility and chastity, of contempt of the world and holy religion and obedience; who nevertheless held back by the love of the world barely follow Christ from afar: and, as the saying goes, do not attempt to touch with a finger the burden which they praise. So noble a virtue is humility: that often the proud and worldlings praise it. And so laudable is the virtue of chastity; that even the incontinent grandly extol it: and to their own shame honour it with meet praise. And this certainly is from God: Who glorifies His most faithful lovers and chaste and humble servants in the present where they are strangers and pilgrims; whom in the dwelling of the blessedness to come, He intends to rejoice with a fuller glory for all the confusion which they have endured. Whoever then lives continently, and keeps his senses under the regular discipline within and without; he shall be justly called a Confessor of the Lord: because he was prudent and faithful over a few goods. For of the five talents delivered to him, that is, the five senses of his body, he was a good steward: living blamelessly, and showing others a good example. For these two things especially in religious and retired persons please God, and shine before men: a good life and holy doctrine. And such a servant after his labours have been accomplished shall enter gladly into the joy of his Lord: because he was found faithful in every work and good word: to the praise of God and the edification of the neighbour for ever and ever. Amen.

SERMON XIII

OF A CAREFUL WATCH OVER THE HEART, AND THE GRACE OF INTERIOR DEVOTION

WITH all watchfulness keep thy heart: because life issueth out from it. Beloved brethren, carefully ponder the admonition of the most wise king Solomon: and anxiously watch over the keeping of your heart: lest the devil find an opening to enter. He does not seek aught but to deceive you: and guilefully to draw you away from God. For when the heart of man is withdrawn from the sovereign good; then it seems to be delighted in the lowest: and is driven hither and thither by various desires. And he who does not withstand betimes: is taken captive and overcome. Nothing is more toilsome than to guard the heart from wandering and from vicious imaginations: gathered from the things of sense. The heart of man is perverse and unsearchable; and prone to evil from his youth. And who can know it; and reckon all its motions every day? Certainly God alone, Who beholds all things before they happen: of Whom it is said in the Psalm: “The Lord knoweth the thoughts of men: that they are vain.” The heart is never at rest from occupation in something: whether it be good or evil. In good the heart is comforted: in evil it is troubled. If any man desire to keep his heart and to restrain it from wandering; let him endeavour to take up a good meditation; and gather honeycomb from the words of Holy Writ, whereby to nourish his soul: let him dismiss light words, not seek curious things; not uplift himself in prosperity; in adversity keep patience: and freely commit to God all things that are to come upon him. Let him also especially ponder this, how he can possess union with God: Who seeks a

dwelling-place in a reposeful heart. Therefore with all his strength let him separate himself from lower cares: and by inflamed prayers and frequent sighs raise up his heart wont to wander, and say: "My eyes are ever towards the Lord." And as often as from frailty, or some need he be hindered from the supreme good: let him begin afresh, and speedily rise by prayer; repent with groans and sorrow that for a moment he neglected the Creator for the creature: to Whom according to his powers he ought to aspire with all his affections and constantly cleave. For from holy reading is drawn a good meditation about God: from a good meditation proceeds devout affection and ready raising of the mind to God. Thence arises fervent and interior prayer piercing the heavens: forsaking all creatures, and longing to cleave to God alone: in Whom are all good things that can be desired. For God alone it is Who fills the whole desire of the soul, pacifies, and rejoices; to Whom every religious should aspire and fly, loving secrecy: and shunning occasions of discourse. For he who seeks places to wander abroad, and neglects to watch over his heart: either does not relish this grace of union: or tasting it but little speedily loses it. And, alas, hardly with great labour and sorrow shall he recover the sweetness of devotion: because he did not keep it with sufficient care. It remains then, leaving aside all trifles, earnestly to flee to Christ and to be united in friendship chiefly with Him: and to cast away and reject all things that withdraw from His love. Whatever does not make a good conscience, or give or increase the heat of the love of Christ; is utterly to be shunned and refused by every cloistered man and religious monk: whose heart ought to be in Heaven, not wandering in the world. O brother monk, who bearest the appearance of holiness in habit and name: close the door of thy mouth and show not the secret of thy heart to all. Open the chamber of thy heart to Jesus Christ the most loving comforter and the most faithful protector of thy life; so that the blessed Jesus before all and above all in Heaven and on earth beloved of thee, long desired and awaited: may deign to come to thee, and take up His abode. Earnestly beseech that He often visit thee and illumine: teach thy ignorance, strengthen thy cowardice; upraise thy heart, drive away distrust: strengthen thy faith, pour in love, and increase fervour. O how well he is guarded and armed against the snares of the devil and evil thoughts and impure imaginations, who has the image of the Crucified fixed in his heart, penetrating all his interior: and always and everywhere urging to the

thought and performance of every good. Then inwardly consoled with wondrous sweetness of heart from the presence of Christ shall he be able justly to say: what holy David with great joy sang to God: "I have run the way of Thy commandments: when Thou didst enlarge my heart." Let nothing then come between thee and Jesus, the lover of innocence and purity, nor lie concealed within, nor endure: yea not even touch as in passing, nor caress with vain praises lest it infect: for the pure and tender heart offered to God in religion: does not suffer with Him anyone outside of Jesus to be joined or converse with it. For all things comforting and beautiful for a time in creatures do not suffice for the full joy of the soul: but Jesus alone is able to satisfy every desire. All things out of Jesus crucified beget weariness and fall short: and as absinthe and most bitter gall torment the soul occupied with various desires. The source therefore of all good and the honeyed stream of all consolation: is Jesus Christ, the true comforter of souls. He who wishes to be comforted by God, let him choose Jesus as his companion: with Whom to speak and walk until he arrive in Heaven. Strive to live in the love of Jesus, to die to the whole world: and to glory in the cross of Christ, not in thyself, or in men. That hour is to be often considered by thee: when thou shalt not be able to utter another word, or move a limb. And although the religious be deprived of earthly goods and friends: he has nevertheless a heavenly treasure locked up in the casket of his heart, Jesus Christ and Him crucified. He has also a most faithful friend of his soul and a most wise guide of his life: the very King of angels and Creator of all things. Wilt thou then have peace and tranquillity of heart: and merit the grace of Christ and the friendship of the angels? Despise thyself for Christ: and as much as is possible aim to have a heart pure, cut off from the world: fervent to things divine and uplifted to heavenly things. For he who seeks no earthly solace without: loves naught in creatures unduly: shall speedily experience interior peace and the love of Christ: and shall most easily bear with the comfort and aid of Christ within all burdens whencesoever they come. For he cuts off many occasions of trouble: he escapes and overcomes many snares of temptations: who for Christ's sake perfectly strips and separates himself from all earthly desires. This man, oppressed by no weight of earthly things, can freely fly to heavenly things: as often as he shall be mindful of his dear lover, Who is in Heaven: or shall hear or read His words. Sadness indeed for the absence of

Jesus sharply pierces; but love from the presence of His grace soothes the languishing soul: consoles the sorrowful, and enkindles the lukewarm. He who cannot so quickly attain this grace of devotion and height of contemplation: let him not lose courage, nor cease to labour: let him groan, pray, sit apart: be silent and recollect himself, await with longanimity, hope with confidence: and he shall be abundantly consoled beyond all that can be thought. For Jesus is loving towards all His saints: and He abandons not them that hope in Him. He frequently proves, He lovingly corrects, He wisely instructs; He calls incessantly, He knocks loudly, He opens freely, He receives joyously: He pardons tenderly, He gives abundantly, He crowns gloriously. Let not therefore the loving blows of Jesus crush thee; and disdain not to listen to His sacred words: by whomsoever or wheresoever they be read. Let not the inconstancy of thy heart cast thee down, nor sickness of body: nor aching of head, incurred in the service of Christ. He Who created thee and called thee to His service: will not be wanting to thee in thy suffering for His name. For all the ills which thou endurest, and whatever good thou shalt do in this house to the honour of God persevering in discipline; shall be written in the book of eternal life: and shall be accounted to thee for a very great reward in the kingdom of Heaven. Turn thee then away from vain things, return to the interior of the mind; think over the benefits of thy dear Lover often vouchsafed to thee: and the still greater to be made known in the time to come. Let His boundless loving-kindness draw thee gratefully to serve the most gentle Saviour: His infinite goodness to love Him: His charity, enduring unto all time, to hope in His mercy: promised to the truly penitent in the end, to be rendered to them that persevere. All things pass away except the love of God; all things perish without Christ: all things become bitter without Jesus incarnate, suffering, crucified, risen, and glorified for the salvation of the world. Let this be your wisdom, brethren, choose this as your study in preference to all study of letters: to meditate day and night on Jesus crucified, sacrificed for us all on the cross, and exalted in Heaven: so that your whole hope tend upwards unto Him lovable and praiseworthy above all. Therefore to suffer for Him and to be wearied in His service: reckon a very great treasure found in the field of the holy cross. Meditation on the divine works and words of Christ begets sweetness and joy: strengthens faith, raises hope, and enkindles charity in the heart: which He has promised that He will give to His faithful.

But the devil in envy, who dared to tempt Christ, and has often aroused persecutions in the Church, and afflicted many of the saints: still does not cease molesting the devout: inducing weariness of good, and dissuading from the severity of the cloister. Alas, with his cunning suggestion he beguiles many by softness and caresses: he terrifies by hardships and austerities. However with the help of Christ his most wicked darts shall not harm: but they shall be to them that fight bravely and resist manfully unto praise and glory: and to the devil unto everlasting shame and punishment. From whose snares and frauds may Jesus Christ ever defend us: Who is at the right hand of the Father above all, God blessed for ever. Amen.

RELIGIOUS, NOTE

Said a certain devout lover of solitude. "Blessed is the lonely monk: to whom the world is an exile, Heaven a fatherland: the cell Paradise. Blessed the religious, devout to God, unknown to the world: to whom the town is a prison, the cloister a place of refreshment: toil repose, solitude solace: mourning joy, silence the asylum of peace. Blessed he to whom sacred reading is food: prayer drink, psalmody recreation: meditation Christ, contemplation God. Blessed the religious who directs all his pursuits and exercises to virtue and the good-pleasure of God: and aims at nothing singular and showy in word or deed: everywhere careful not to give offence to God or the neighbour. Blessed he who takes it in good part when one corrects him and teaches him aright: lest he abide in error and perish miserably. Blessed he who strictly guards his mouth: that he utter not an idle or hurtful word. Such a one shall have great peace, a good conscience and repute: and shall gain a special grace of devotion. He makes many quarrels cease: who is patient and holds his peace. The religious abiding in retirement: is as a lamp in the night safely burning. Winds have blown: and they shall not harm him who takes leisure in God and prays. There is truly a great treasure in the mouth of the wise man: but not a less in the heart of him that is silent and prays." A certain man of experience said: "Whatever good I gather by silence: I scatter it nearly all by talking with men." Because Samson told his secret to a woman, and did not conceal the parable of the honey: afterwards he was captured by the enemy and mocked. It is good therefore for a religious to keep silence: and carefully to weigh his

words. For he who keeps silence well: as it were carries with him a bag full of money to the home of his mind.

AN EXAMPLE OF SILENCE

There was in the up-country a certain monk of the Cistercian Order, a diligent warden of his mouth: and a careful observer of cloistral discipline. He, on fire with the zeal of devotion, scarcely spoke a single word in a week. To whom the Abbot said by way of solace: “Brother, I give thee leave to speak sometimes with the brethren:” Who replied: “Reverend Father, I do not wish to have such a leave.” Hearing which the Abbot was edified in the answer of the brother who so willingly kept silence.

AN EXAMPLE OF SOLITUDE

A certain brother of the Order of Regulars having been sent abroad, when he had finished his business strove to return quickly and with eagerness: that he might take leisure in God more freely in silence. But while on the way, he met a certain traveller, a friend and acquaintance of his: who stated that he had visited different holy places and monasteries. Questioned therefore concerning religious houses: he also said that he had been in the holy cloister of Chartreux. And when he had spoken much in praise of the situation of that place on a high mountain and in a lonely wilderness, and of the austerity of the brethren dwelling there: finally he narrated this: “I found there a brother, with whom it gave me great pleasure to speak: and I questioned him with curiosity, saying: ‘How long hast thou dwelt here?’ Who answered: ‘Forty years have passed, and meanwhile I have not seen the front gate: by which I entered.’ ” Hearing this the aforesaid brother wondered: and related these things to his other brothers as a good example of the love of solitude. O how rare and strange is such conduct in many religious of these days; who would look on it as the penalty of a gaol: if within a year they should not go forth for the sake of travelling outside the monastic bounds, or beyond the gate.

SERMON XIV

OF CONSTANCY AND PERSEVERANCE IN THE STATE OF RELIGION

STAND with confidence: and you shall see the help of the Lord over you. Beloved brethren, accept with pleasure a word of pious exhortation urging you to perseverance in the state of religion: which has a very great recompense in Heaven. Purpose firmly in your hearts that you desire to remain with constancy in this place and Order which you have freely chosen: and to endure good things and evil with all in this house gathered together for Christ's sake long before your time. He Who has granted a good beginning: will give by His grace a better consummation. For you have not been called to this community because of your merits: but you should believe that you are made partakers of their crowns. Be glad to be aided by their prayers and to be sustained by their help: and ever give thanks to God. For you have not come to idle and feast: but to serve God with fidelity and devotion. And so much the more careful and ready should you be for every observance of the Order and for the common labours; the more advantages you now have in buildings and books, in food and clothing: which many of the elders before you had not. You have entered into their labours, be grateful therefore for the good things you have received. These temporal things made ready by God: are bestowed upon you as a present for the sustenance of your body. If you use them moderately with giving of thanks and good will; then still greater goods will be added to you in Heaven: which shall be most assuredly rendered to all who persevere in the discipline of the Order. And if you cannot yet understand or grasp the joys to come prepared in the heavenly nuptials; nevertheless firmly believe that God is faithful and mighty to give what He

has promised to them that love Him: who not by force but with a free mind serve Him day and night without complaint. Therefore with great care cast out of your heart speedily harmful sadness, and all indignation as poison of the devil: and strive to live among your brethren like angels of peace among their fellow citizens. Take upon your shoulders the yoke of the Lord, light and sweet to them that love: until you attain the fatherland of everlasting bliss. But meanwhile you must be tried after the manner of the saints by divers temptations which often happen in religion: and are wont grievously to afflict novices from this side and that: that thereby proved as gold in the furnace, and purged from the rust of past bad habits: you may be bright in the sight of God as new lambs washed in the springs. For after tears and griefs you shall receive divine consolations and lights of the understanding: relieving all toil and distress. What more do you desire? Behold, now are given to you earthly goods for the support of the body on the way; and hereafter will be given heavenly and everlasting goods in the kingdom of God with the holy angels; because you have forsaken acquaintance and friends, and have chosen to serve God rather than the world. If therefore you abide constant in what you have commenced: you shall hear with joy and assurance from Christ in the judgement. “You are they who have continued with Me in My temptations; and I dispose to you, as My Father hath disposed to Me, a kingdom: that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom.” O sweet and comforting word, encouraging to perseverance in the Order we have taken: and in whatsoever temptation and tribulation or weakness a man may be involved. It belongs certainly to God to aid: and to free the afflicted from every distress of mind and body. And he who trusts in God, praying and patiently enduring himself: he shall be comforted in due time, giving thanks for the help vouchsafed him from Heaven. God is not a respecter of persons, but in every condition and place, where there is the memory of His name under Heaven: He shall be nigh the tempted and troubled of heart. He shall hear them for His mercy; and shall show them in secret His judgements: and His wonders in all things which He works upon earth. No man can say to God, “Why dost Thou thus afflict me and leave me dry; and dost thus advance another and allow him to have many of his wishes?” Foolish and vain is this thought: even in the least thing to doubt or complain of the providence and goodness of God. It is the habit of the weak and unwise to blame and interpret ill the actions of the prudent which they

do not understand; who very often wonder and are scandalized within themselves: why God suffers this or that, so evidently evil, to happen. To whom the psalmist thus replies: "The Lord is just in all His ways: and holy in all His works." And again: "Thou art just, O Lord: and Thy judgement is right." Hold this then firmly, that in every place the eyes of the Lord behold the good and the bad; and no man can hide from His judgements, nor excuse his sins with many fair words: nor appeal in contention to a higher judge. Whoever therefore abiding in a lowly condition and in his Order shall have more resolutely struggled against temptations and his vices; he shall deserve greater grace of devotion now: and hereafter shall enjoy the blessedness of a fuller glory. Every religious can save his soul and make progress in virtue in his Order and in the place provided for him by God: if he carefully observe what the Order hath established, and what the superior commands and counsels to be done. Let no one therefore be lightly seduced; nor think with foolish and vain imaginings of another place: and prophesying of the uncertain future more pleasant things to himself, say: "O God, if I were in such a place and Order: how well and devoutly I would conduct myself: and no longer complain or be troubled by anyone." Alas, miserable and foolish man, who for want of fervour dost contemplate the world outside: and often dost imagine vain things because of the distress of thy present passion; why dost thou not do this good in this place, where with the grace of many brethren, and the peace of a good conscience thou canst live with God as witness and aider? Why dost thou neglect the little things told thee; and presumest of greater things in the future? Know beforehand that it most usually befalls lukewarm and indocile disciples: otherwise and far worse than they in their mind first imagined, without fruit of any worth. This fancy has deceived many; easy changing of place has made many learned to err: hasty migration to another Order has saddened very many. For it has been very often proved in others: that seldom has he come back better, who sought many places. For wherever a man may be, he shall find men: the blind also and the weak whom certainly it behoves to bear. And haply thou wilt see some more imperfect who will not be pleasing to thee in many things: nor wilt thou likewise be pleasing to them. Some maybe will say or think of thee askance: if thou hadst been worth anything, thou wouldst rather have remained in thy place and Order with peace. However the motive of one wandering from place to place will

speedily be made clear: what moved him more. For feigned holiness cannot remain concealed long, nor frivolity of soul: nor does too great freedom in wandering edify others. For the nurse of true devotion is the solitary and enclosed religious. Hear the parable of a certain devout old man. "When a man goes out lame of one foot or deprived of one eye: he seldom comes back sound in both." The fox leaving its hole: cannot long travel the high road. So a man of fickle mind and deceitful cannot long disguise himself: but he betrays himself even unwillingly before many strangers: either by manifest words or deeds. Often also a movement of anger will show the asperity of his impatience; when he is reproved for his fault: or compelled to keep silence. A proud man inwardly passionate, for a while sometimes represses himself before others: lest he be outwardly blamed and lose respect. But becoming more free in course of time: he shamelessly returns to his wont. And thus it shall be made manifest to many, that he was not truly humble: but wished to seem good and just. The temptation of the devil does not suffer a runaway to be hidden long or to live in peace; but he commences to annoy him by fresh and unexpected obstacles; and toils to vex and confound the coward in a much worse fashion: because he foolishly left his little nest. For the yoke of the Order day and night laid upon the neck of the monk: soon shows how much he can carry and endure for the love of God. Therefore in every place and condition, in every office and spiritual dignity, or temporal occupation: extremely needful is long-suffering patience and an abundant outpouring of divine grace with frequent instance in prayer; lest the weak mind, battered by frequent blows, be moved by sudden anger to impatience, or by the suggestion of Satan seek to return vengeance: bearing indignantly the insults put upon it.

Soldier of Christ, do not fly: do not cast thyself down; grow not lukewarm from thy first fervour: nor doubt of the consolation of divine sweetness. Seek not outward comforts of the body very harmful to thy soul: but for God's sake bear temptations and the vexations of men as well in this place as in another house. Nor deem thyself forsaken of God if many things befall to try thy patience; for thou art not better than Christ Who suffered: nor more holy than the martyrs who were cruelly put to death. Men act and often speak ill like men; nor is it always true what they say: nor must one care much whether they praise or blame. In all times and places beware of evil deeds and scandal: and God shall free thee from the ill word lyingly

spoken of thee. It is written in one of the collects super populum of Lent. "Protect, O Lord, Thy people, and mercifully cleanse it of all sins; for no adversity shall harm it: if no wickedness overmaster it." For punishment does not make a man guilty: but guilt demands a just penalty. Have God therefore before thy eyes, neglect not to pray in trouble; write or read in due time the holy Scriptures: the better to overcome weariness of heart. God often gives in one hour: that which He has refused a whole week. Never presume of thy virtue and justice; but trust utterly in the mercy and goodness of God: and prudently and discreetly go forward between hope and despair. Never be so joyous and secure: as to shut out from thee fear and modesty. He who wishes to please God and edify the neighbour; ought so to order all his words and habits without and within: as if he were immediately to be presented before God and His angels. Do not therefore, religious brother, if thou art light and dissipated and wordy, boast of thy outward habit before men as if thou wert a saint: nor take pride in any work private or common; but rather thou shalt deem thyself unprofitable, if thou thinkest rightly: as one who canst hardly return one from a thousand talents. Thou art not therefore to be called a holy and great master because outwardly thou wearest the cappa; which an ass might do, if he were so clothed. Heed rather the stains of thy conscience than the esteem of men; for all things are not so sound and bright before God: as they appear to be fair to men. Man sees in the face, but God in the heart; Who also considers things most minute: which thou dost not know, or weighest but little. Therefore bow down thy heart under the severe scrutiny of God; and be not vainly puffed up because of the dignity of religion: nor speak boastfully of the virtues of others and the miracles of holy men. He blackens and shames himself, who praises the holiness of his fathers: and neglects to follow their humble life; who is called a regular and a religious: and does not fervently pursue the rule of life which the saints have left to their posterity; who daily lives on the goods of the monastery: and luke warmly observes the monastic statutes, or lightly breaks them. Nevertheless on account of the holy fathers of previous days who founded the Order of religion and drew up rules of life: the slothful and dissipated also are honoured by people and magnates of the world who think them to be servants of God. Therefore let each rightly examine himself, and give others a good example: lest he do an injury to the holy Order: and beget shame to himself by his ill conduct. "Wo

to that man,” saith the Lord, “by whom scandal cometh.” If you wish truly to know and commend any religious; look not to the white or black habit of the body, nor heed subtlety of words: but consider his humble ways, expressing the image of the interior man. Silently also reverence the grace of Christ, which he has received, and love and praise God for His gifts: Who chose for Himself such a servant in a desert land full of temptations and dangers. Cautiously however and moderately praise him whom thou lovest: lest thou deceive thyself and him: if thou say anything, beyond what is befitting, of which thou shouldst afterwards blush.

Brothers, we are all one in Christ, we have one heavenly Father: we are all called the sons of one holy mother Church, whoever believe in Christ and are baptized in Christ: therefore we ought not to dispute about the outward habit, and different manner of life; but let each study to live well in his Order and condition: and wholly to please God worthily with giving of thanks. For not agreeableness or magnitude of place, nor fair raiment, nor excellence of grace maketh a perfect religious; but utter renunciation of the world, and daily mortification of vices: and especially purity of heart, and love of virtue aiming directly at God. The name of religion has great praise among men of the world: but without contempt of the world it is of little weight with God. But what worth a noble name without virtuous deed; what profit a sublime state without humility and charity? He is truly a religious who freely renounces the world, and in his heart does not veer round again to the world; who binds himself for ever to God: and endeavours to crush all his own wishes for God’s sake. For he who with the holy habit and good name thus fulfills the acts of virtue without: and yet in every thought and deed aims only at pleasing God within: he is duly to be praised and called the friend of God. If thou desirest to overcome vainglory; give heed to each of thy shortcomings as something known to all: and the movement of vainglory will cease. Beware of showing singularity in speech or conduct; do not presume too much of thyself when prosperity befalls thee: lest thou be cast down by an assault of adversity. Stay in thy place and set thyself to patience; and thou shalt find peace and grace in the sight of God and men: and thou shalt be dear to all the brethren. But that no one may easily think of changing his habit or place: I will relate you what happened to a certain brother for your greater warning.

AN EXAMPLE

There was a certain brother who had lived long respected in the Order of Regulars: and being appointed procurator gained repute and esteem with many religious and seculars. For a long time he had the temptation and desire to pass to another Order and a place remote: which also he did, but without sufficient foresight and prudence. For from the miserable issue: was afterwards made apparent the inconstancy of his mind. However he had secured for himself in secret a place with certain mendicant religious of sufficiently good observance, living under the rule of blessed Augustine: by whom also he was kindly and willingly received. Nor was there long delay in probation: but to satisfy his urgent desire he was clothed in haste. So eagerly did he seek and pant after that Order: that he would willingly have made his profession the same day: if that had pleased the brethren. But the brethren, more cautious than he, because they knew not his character and conduct: did not give way to his impatient desire: but willingly gave him the usual time of probation. For they judged according to outward appearances: that this stranger would be useful to them, for they needed persons for the reformation of the Order. But when he had been now clothed: his heart was changed to other than he had thought. And he began to be exceedingly sad and sorry: that he had left the former house where he lived so long: and without due cause had secretly forsaken his brethren: whom he grieved and shamed not a little by his departure. Scarcely a week had passed: and for trouble of mind he mourned and lamented so much: that he could neither eat nor drink. Questioned therefore what disturbed him: he said, "I can have no rest at all, or peace of conscience: if I do not return again to my former brethren." Hearing which the brothers were much saddened and perturbed; and they bitterly reproached his inconstancy: that in so short a time he had changed again, and had been guilty of childish presumption. To whom he replying with humility and shame: thus excused himself. "Believe me, brothers, that now for many years I have had this temptation, to cross over to another Order: and this idea was so strongly fixed in my soul: that I thought I could never change. But now I have proved by my own experience that it is otherwise: the which before I could not entertain." When therefore he had said this: that the scandal still secret might not break out and grow: having wisely consulted together, they sent

to a certain Prior of the Regulars dwelling in the neighbourhood: asking him to deign to come to them with all speed, for a very urgent case of necessity. When he arrives, they explain the whole matter to him in order: and earnestly demand what is now to be done. Nor is there any delay in settling the matter, but each party contributes to the re-establishment of peace. The aforesaid brother then, repentant with great sorrow, is stripped of the habit which he had taken; and is again clothed by the Prior in the habit of Regulars in the Order to which he was accustomed: and thus the occasion of disturbance is removed and destroyed. Then a companion was given him and he returned to his former cloister; and humbly beseeching forgiveness for the offences he had committed: he was received with compassion by his brethren. And at once he received a wholesome penance: and was chastised for the error of his presumption. And rendered more cautious for the future, he learnt not to do anything rashly; and not foolishly to run to other houses.

SERMON XV

OF CAREFUL WATCHFULNESS OF THE YOUNG AGAINST MANY TEMPTATIONS

SEE how you walk circumspectly: because the days are evil. Beloved brethren, in these words the glorious teacher, blessed Paul the apostle, warns us all: to be circumspect, and to fight bravely against vices in this house of the Lord, which is the dwelling of many wayfarers of the world; wherein is raised the standard of the holy cross: as a sign of spiritual warfare for the gaining of golden crowns in the heavenly kingdoms. Wherefore let no man grow weary of the desire of progress: the Lord of armies is with us: Who is the mighty uprooter of vices and the terror of our foes. Let no man be disturbed, or affrighted, by the assault of divers temptations, or by the multitude of contrary winds: or by the fatigue of daily labours; by many tribulations we must all enter the kingdom of Heaven: the gospel of Christ preaches, and the Acts of the Apostle teach. Yea, also, the apostle Paul himself, the vessel of election, frequently rapt to the secrets of Heaven, had temptations; suffered many annoyances from men, and wearied in many toils often heard and bore detractions and unjust complaints against himself. And yet he did not because of the afflictions of adversity depart from the service and love of Christ, nor grow cold: but rather manfully offered himself to endure all; and encouraged others with him to the combat for the crown of glory: which Christ has promised to His servants who endure many contradictions for Him. And blessed Paul became so much the more joyous and assured of receiving future rewards in

Heaven: the more cruelly he suffered from men known and unknown as a man contemptible in the world.

Brethren, be not too much afraid of suffering and being despised for Christ; all these things are nothing and shall speedily be ended: yea, in comparison of the good and the evil things to come, they are to be accounted as scarcely of a single point, or moment. Know then that this life and regular discipline, which by the inspiration of God you have taken up, is good, and very wholesome for your soul: but not safe from the snares of the enemy: nor always at peace from the annoyances of men and the reproaches of the perverse. For now this one, now that one says or does something: which will not be pleasing in your eyes. What then shall you do? Be patient and hold your peace; God will fight for you: and the truth will make you free. Do not lose your merit, but with silence endure a little: deeming yourselves worthy of all confusion. As yet you are not in Heaven with the holy angels; but in the world with men good and bad: who shall not be wanting in this region of the shadow of death. Therefore you may well more often lament and not lightly laugh: but rather fear and not foolishly presume of yourselves. Carefully therefore in every place and time walk in the sight of God: because you are uncertain of a good end: and how God will judge your actions you know not. "Fear the Lord, all ye His saints," saith holy David, "for there is no want to them that fear Him." Why does he urge all to fear; and to stand with great watchfulness of discipline? Because terrible are the judgements of God upon the sons of men: and no one is certain whether he is worthy of hatred or love. Therefore it is very profitable for a man still carnal, dissolute and unmortified to have the fear of God: and to fear all His works, and to think lowly of himself. For the fear of God makes a man withdraw from sin: be on the watch against the dangers of temptations: grieve over past evils, abstain from present delights: take moderately of the necessities of life: and rule his actions with discretion: always to aim at the more perfect: and ever to seek and diligently execute all things which please God more: and praiseworthily to draw and move all good things to the honour of His name.

Alas, alas, brethren, many perils surround us on all sides: as the flesh, the devil, and the whole world seated in wickedness. Hence are begotten dangers and temptations: and few are they who escape without wound and stain. What wonder then if a man fear for his weakness; when on all sides

he sees the snares of the devil laid out for him? For if he does good, if he reads, sings or writes well: if he prays, studies, preaches, or celebrates; behold at once the devil is there with vainglory, attacking the just man by means of success: desiring to cast him down, and to deprive him of the grace bestowed on him by God. But if he fall into any fault through frailty: at once the foe runs up with joy: and suggests that it is not a great evil, nor seriously to be punished, but even to be confessed shortly and carefully excused: since many do and have done the like and worse. Thus the cunning adversary beguiles him who has fallen; that thereby he may repent but little, go to confession late: put off communion, fear to minister: turn himself to outer things, dread the cell: seek to gossip and idle, pretend he is weak: neglect what is necessary, search into the business of others: be careless of things divine, turn over in his mind the things of earth. If a man does not drive out all this betimes: he runs into more serious snares of the devil. Again he seeks to wound and overthrow certain weaklings by anger and impatience: and saddens and disturbs them for a little thing lost or taken away: arouses anger, injects suspicion; perverts good actions, sows false for true, and persuades to render evil for good. O wickedness of the deceitful enemy: how many are thy snares and deceits, in every place and time, wounding secretly and unexpectedly. And who shall know them; and number all? God alone, Who knows all secrets, knows the guiles of the devil: Who teaches that we are to be on our guard against them by the sacred scriptures revealed of the Holy Ghost. What therefore shall a man do grievously tempted, and in many ways vexed by the presence of the enemy; who also is charged and ridiculed before others? Whither shall he fly to escape the snares: and hear or see no evils? When shall the time come: to have peace and rest? I have told you and again I tell you, little and great. Our peace is in much patience; in true humility, in contempt of all earthly solace, in the brave endurance of adversities: in the patient expectation of the joys of Heaven. Call to mind therefore, most dearly beloved, in your tribulation the favours of God and His wonderful works, from the beginning of creation even to the consummation of the world: and you shall find that the loving-kindness of God surpasses the malice of men sparing their crimes: that they may amend their life unto better. And when He scourges the pious with adversities: He also shows His love in His chosen ones. They then that reckon stripes as favours, they have peace now: and them a most

joyous recompense shall follow in Heaven. For there is full peace and safety from foes: freedom from vice, health from disease: rest from toil. There riches without anxiety, delights without bitterness, knowledge without error; love without feigning, bliss without sorrow: honour without confusion, praise and glory without ceasing. But alas, these good things are not in the world, where all things are mingled with evil; for rare is perfect virtue: seldom is the conscience pure from every stain. And unless divine grace be at hand and a careful custody of the heart: soon the negligent man falls into his accustomed vices and sins. And whence does this come? Because we are born with sin, and from youth we are prone to the pleasures of the flesh; we give ourselves half-heartedly to virtue, we are withdrawn unwillingly from our own ideas: we are entangled in vanities, we examine the affairs of others; and therefore our senses, even after conversion and confession of sins, are more apt to return to the earthly and visible things familiar to them: than to rise to the desire of things heavenly and invisible. It is a grievous pain to a dissipated man to withdraw his mind from the base goods to which his nature is habituated: it is a great task to raise his soul to the goods above and eternal, hidden from the eyes of men. Alas, alas, what anguish of soul: to toil and strive every day against oneself, for the reward of everlasting life.

But the so great goods and immense merits and boundless rewards still lie hid: which God shall most abundantly render hereafter to them that toil, struggle, grieve, and piously endure: according to His promises in the holy gospel: “Behold,” He saith, “your reward is great in Heaven: which shall be given you for the short combat and distress in the world.” But who can know and tell all the perils of this life: which may befall a man in the place of temptation under the sun? For to the just and to the wicked: many like things equally occur. Often also adversity saddens more: than the gain of good rejoices. If a man is poor: anxiety urges him to acquire possessions. If he is rich: he has fear of losing. Wo then to him who has, and wo to him who has not: for from both sides threaten risks of sin. The Wise Man therefore prays choosing the middle way: and says: “Give me neither beggary, nor riches: give me only the necessities of life.” More than this, my son, seek not. For Christ’s sake fear not poverty, beloved of Christ: for willingly to suffer want is virtuous: and the gaining of the kingdom of Heaven. Sweeter often is the dry bread of the poor man hungry: than the

loaded table of the rich man sated. More wholesome to the beggar is the drink of water, under a miserable shelter of wood: than abundance of strong wine in the palace of a king. For satiety of food overloads the rich man more: the drinking of wine does more harm to his head: than poor nourishment injures the stomach of the ailing beggar. But holy poverty is very soon exposed to danger in great riches; sobriety in luscious banquets, humility in lofty honours; chastity in friendship with women, devotion in tumult, compunction in laughter: silence in crowds, purity of heart in news, quiet in labours; mildness in adversity, prudence in offices; tranquillity in occupations, discretion in reproofs, the taste for things divine in vain stories. Behold how virtues are dimmed and undermined: by too great frequency of certain doings with seculars. For spiritual sweetness is speedily lost by outward affairs: and the heat of charity besought of God cools and is extinguished through long gossiping. And unless lightness of mind be curbed by compunction, lukewarmness driven out by prayer: peace recovered by reading: the conscience often cleansed by pure and humble confession: accustomed bad habits return, grow, harden, oppress and afflict. Wherefore it is needful that a religious brother admonish chiefly himself, and receive kindly the admonitions of others; exercise great care against his passions, and bravely war against the assault of vices: for without doubt brave fighting is the way to the everlasting joys, to be bestowed on the victors at the finish. Hence Christ, speaking by blessed John in the Apocalypse, earnestly exhorts His faithful soldier to fight: and to be on his guard against the wickedness of the devil by prayer and sacred studies. "Be thou faithful unto death," He saith, "and I will give thee the crown of life." And again in the same. "To him that overcometh I will give the hidden manna: and a new name written, which no man knoweth but he that receiveth." Whereof blessed Paul saith: "No man shall be crowned: except he strive lawfully." Two precious gifts Christ promises His warrior so that he fail not in the combat against vice; to wit, the manna of divine consolation in the present: and the Crown of everlasting joy in the kingdom of Heaven. Be not therefore, brethren, seduced with empty words by friends in the world, nor heed temporal honours: but hold to the good and right path leading by the regular life to life eternal. Which may our Lord Jesus Christ grant us all after the labours and sorrows of this mortal life: Who for our

salvation mightily toiled in the world, fought, grieved, wept, prayed:
suffered and being crucified triumphed. Amen.

SERMON XVI

OF THE STRICT JUDGEMENT OF GOD, WHERE ALL CREATURES SHALL ACCUSE US

BE you humbled under the mighty hand of God: that He may exalt you in the time of visitation. Beloved brethren, gravely heed these sacred words of blessed Peter the apostle: which have just been read in his epistle. For he exhorts all to true humility of heart; that a man consider the most sublime power of God over him: and the manifold misery of his own weakness. These two joined together make a man deem humbly of himself: and take pride of no good work. Hence again he saith: “God resisteth the proud: but to the humble He giveth grace.” Examine then your hearts open in all things to God: think over the evils of the past, the dangers of the present, the judgements of God to come: and how severely all our works are to be searched. We know not, brethren, how God will judge us. But I fear that our accusers will urge many serious charges against us: of which we now think little. But who are these our accusers? Truly very many: of whom now some are to be mentioned.

The holy angels will accuse us; because we did not obey the divine inspirations: but often rather indulged flesh and blood beyond need.

The terrible and malignant demons will accuse us: alleging the places, times and persons, in which and with whom we have sinned: and have not done due penance.

The holy patriarchs and prophets will accuse us: because we have not followed their good example and faith by our works: who foretold us many good things by the sacred writings concerning Christ and the life to come.

The holy apostles and evangelists will accuse us; because we have so carelessly and lukewarmly trodden that way of perfection, which they learnt from Christ and observed: even after we have entered the cloister, and promised to serve God.

The holy martyrs slain for Christ will accuse us; because we have but feebly imitated their patience, when vexed even in few things: and having fallen to softness of the flesh, scarcely retain a spark of our first fervour.

The holy confessors and all the religious Orders will accuse us: because we have not followed according to our powers their abstinence and labour in watchings and many fasts, in prayers, readings, and holy meditations, as we read of them.

Good pastors, priests and doctors will accuse us: who toiled much for the salvation of souls, for the conversion of sinners, for the discipline of religious, for the consolation of the afflicted: because we have not in the cloister perfectly followed their prudence and their preaching by contempt of the world: nor with sufficient reverence and love gratefully received their books most sweet beyond honey and the honeycomb: nor studiously read, nor diligently given heed to their holy discourses.

The readers, the cantors, the writers and all the books which we have in the choir, in the dormitory, in the refectory, and in our cells for study will accuse us; because we have made little profit of them: but have more often listened to foreign and vain discourses. Therefore they would say, if they could speak: “We have piped to you and you have not danced for the greatness of the joys and the rewards to come which are contained written in our volumes: which God has handed down to you for your comfort and instruction.” And again lamenting with the weeping children they would say: “We have mourned for you, and you have not wept for the exceeding miseries and pains to come: which we have frequently denounced to you.”

The holy hermits, lovers of the solitary life, separated in mind and body from the world, will accuse us; because we have neglected perfectly to copy their angelic manner of life, and heavenly contemplation in continual prayers and devout meditations, in silence and toils: in renunciation of earthly things and mortification of vices. And so they will rejoice in great glory before God and the angels: but we shall stand ashamed because of the luxuries which we have willingly received.

The holy virgins, saintly widows, and all youths and maidens, observing, with constancy, chastity beloved of God, will accuse us: who although they were frail by sex and age: nevertheless could not be torn away by cruel torments from love and fidelity to their heavenly Spouse. But we with difficulty refrain from the dangers and occasions of sins of the flesh; for the most part fast unwillingly and observe strictness of silence with laxity: foolishly dread the cloister and the retirement of the cell established for peace of heart and preservation of devotion; and alas, often give offence whispering with light words at the instigation of the devil: who is the author of the disturbance of whispering and levity. For many sacred virgins and noble matrons, amid friends and kinsfolk in the world, amid wealth and honours, refrained from pleasures; amid persecutors and mockers, held bravely their purpose of chastity: bore most patiently imprisonment and dungeons, chains, blows, and exile. What then shall we say to this, who are men? For too often we seek to wander abroad: whence we bring back little fruit. Let us blush, dear brethren, that we read of so many glorious saints and holy virgins, old men and maidens suffering: and still we are little able to suffer. Let us follow them doing penance for our sins: whom we cannot follow dying for virtue. Let us all say groaning and weeping: “Have mercy on us, O Lord, spare our sins; grant pardon for all our offences: be appeased by the merits and prayers of Thy saints most gratefully accepted by Thee.”

There are moreover many other accusers for us also: to wit, a convenient place, a holy Order, and the religious habit. For even if we have left the world to outward appearance, and wear a religious habit with others: nevertheless we do not so strictly keep the statutes of the Order as we have promised.

Our superiors and directors will accuse us: when they are carefully questioned on each point concerning our good conduct in the presence of Christ. For it is necessary that they say simply the truth of the matter: before Christ the judge Who knows all secrets. Among many things it will be chiefly demanded of them and required of us: whether we have been obedient in all with due reverence; whether we have kept peace and concord with the brethren, saving the discipline of the Order: whether we have celebrated the Divine Office day and night devoutly and attentively, cheerfully and watchfully: whether we have prayed fervently and frequently for benefactors living and dead: whether we have done meet penance for

our excesses and shortcomings; whether from charity and loving compassion we have poured out prayers for friends and foes in affliction: whether we have set the common good and obedience before private study and devotion.

Our brothers also will accuse us, seeing our manner of life from morning until evening: because we have not given them good example, watching, praying, toiling, and instant in other devout exercises; but have often spent the precious time of penance fruitlessly: seeking our own ease, and neglecting things profitable.

Men of the world will accuse us, wayfarers and chance guests: because they have seen us wandering outside, light of manners, dissolute of words: well clothed, eating daintily, working little, talking long: late to choir, hastening to the cell and repose. For we are bound to give them and all men an example of holy conduct: because we are made a spectacle to God and angels: and to all who behold us, learned and unlearned, it behoves us to show the way of eternal life: and to bear the repute of a good name.

Moreover the elements will accuse us, and all creatures of Heaven and earth, because of the many services rendered for our use; because we have not shown meet worship to our Creator: and have not paid, as was due and befitting, thanksgiving for blessings bestowed with all the affection of our heart, according to the strength which we have received from God. For since we are in health, and receive without great anxiety from our providers daily necessities; and willingly accept gratuitous gifts: therefore we are now the more obliged towards God, as guests of the King of Heaven.

The fire will speak: and cry out against our sloth and ingratitude. "I by the order of God my Creator succour you in many ways; I as a faithful servant serve gratis the whole and the sick in the kitchen, in the bakery, in the brewery, in the lavatory and in the church: and as often as necessary I show myself kind to all who wish to warm themselves at the fire. I by the power given me burn straw, turf, stones and wood: I dry the damp, warm the cold, soften the hard, harden the soft: I work in different materials contrary effects, by the wondrous power of God impressed on the laws of nature: that you may have your conveniences: to serve God with joy and great gratitude. For in winter I warm your hands and feet; I light the candles, put darkness to flight: render to your eyes the brightness of light. What should I do that I have not done? Answer thy Creator: if I have

refused to obey His command. For I have done without contradiction both for the good and the bad: whatever the Lord my Creator, the almighty and merciful God, commanded to be done. For the good indeed and the just I give heat and light to their profit: but for the bad and ungrateful I flame unto vengeance. And when God in anger bids, then I burn cities, towns and castles: and waste both the rich and the poor without respect of persons; and reduce to ashes all the joy, beauty and abundance of the world; and still remain unharmed in the form of my own nature.”

The air will say: “I provide a good breeze and serenity that you may walk with ease: toil with ingenuity, sow with fruit: and gather the ripened harvest into the barns and stores of men. But because men often abuse good gifts to work vanities and unlawful gains: God, angered by their malice, of a sudden compels me to work terrors on land, on sea, on trees, on beasts, on castles, on towns, on fields, and on holy houses. For while it is still bright day and nobody is heeding, I raise clouds, produce winds, send forth lightnings, beget thunders, arouse storms, disturb the sea, cast down hail, pour out rain, strike the earth, tear up trees, overthrow houses, and show with terror the power of God over these lower creatures; that all the sinners of the earth may learn to fear God: and weigh from present evils, how dreadful shall be the judgement to come on the last day.”

The water will say. “I water the earth with showers, produce springs and rivers, nourish fishes of divers kinds, strongly carry ships and galleons laden with much wealth, and with the blowing of the wind bear them to distant lands and islands: I show many wonderful works of God to them that travel on the sea and in many waters; that they may proclaim His works with exultation when they arrive in port: and give thanks generously as delivered from great dangers. And because sins exact penalty, therefore when God is grievously offended I often strike and destroy ships with a tempest: often I drown men, drink in precious wealth, and cast to the bottom as the mud of the streets the gold and silver wherein men trust; so that thereby the avaricious and proud mighty ones, who oppress the poor and defraud the innocent, may not boast in their riches, nor place their hope in earthly things: but in the living God Who made all things out of nothing, and feeds the poor in little. I wash the hands and feet of the saints, and I serve in many ways the evil and ungrateful; I give drink to the thirsty, fill wells and canals, cleanse stains, make garments white: and from springs

and torrents I produce sweet waters for various uses of men and beast. I because of the sins of men was changed into blood in the land of Egypt: against nature I flowed most plentifully from the rock in the desert; at the prayers of the saints I was changed into sweetness: and at the word of Christ into the taste of the best wine. They then are obliged to render many thanks to God who have abundance of water, and take fishes with their nets: but those who inebriate themselves with wine and various liquors and to the poor give little or nothing: shall be tormented with the rich man in Hell.”

The earth will say: “I support men and brutes; I offer smooth ways and straight paths to wayfarers through fields and woods: I employ as a rampart mountains and hills lest the waters prevail. I nourish trees, grasses and various kinds of herbs: I bring forth vines and olives, figs and pomegranates, apples, pears, nuts, almonds, beans, peas, barley, wheat, flowers, roses, lilies, violets: and every year I render the usual return to the cultivators of the earth and the harvesters. And for all these blessings freely bestowed upon men, naught else do I ask and hold as thanks: but that everywhere all the nations of the earth, and the islands of the peoples know, serve, preach, praise and worship God; and above all goods visible and invisible love, honour and exalt Him: as long as they live, smell, breathe, tread the earth, dig, plant and build. I also after the death of the flesh receive the bodies of the dead into my lap as a mother her children deprived of light: for of the earth all were made, and unto the earth all shall return as to their mother, whence Adam was formed: and as to the common hospice of all mortal pilgrims. For when any man becomes useless to the world, either worn out with old age, or slain in battle, or infected by disease, or repulsive in appearance, and nobody will now retain him in the house, or nurse him in bed; then without long delay friends and neighbours have recourse to me, make ready a pit, and bring their castaway to me: and beneath my shelter hide him in the ground. And him whom they had loved in life, and praised and honoured highly: now dead they avoid, close their nostrils, dread to gaze on him, and depart. But I, the earth created by God, full of compassion, abhor and spurn no dead man however miserable a Lazarus, or wounded, or fetid; but without respect of persons I receive universally all the sons and daughters of Adam: who because of the sin of their first parent are compelled to return to the dust, whence all took their origin. I open indifferently to poor and rich a place of burial; and if

sometimes the living quarrel for a more worthy position: the dead however are silent, and contradict not them that bury them. All the kings of the earth, all princes, all dukes, counts, barons, military leaders, nobles, commoners, prelates, abbots, doctors, lawyers, priests, clerics and laics, in a small hut I enclose, cover and keep: until at the sound of the last trumpet Christ shall appear in His majesty with the holy angels in the greatest glory. For then I am compelled to give up again the bodies sleeping in their graves: to present in judgement without delay all the good and bad with their bodies: that each may receive reward or punishment according to his works which he did in life. Nor then shall I be able to keep back by violence anyone, nor by prayer nor bribe hide longer from the face of the Judge and from the wrath of the Lamb, nor protect by arms: for the just Lord shall judge justly all the bounds of the earth: saving the righteous in mercy: and most justly condemning the wicked for their demerits.” O would that all mortals would weigh these things: and frequently think with fear and groaning of the severe judgement of God. For, as the apostle says, we shall all stand before the judgement seat of Christ, to render an account of every past evil action: all creatures accusing us, as has been said, the angels standing round and the demons hungrily waiting to take with them the damned into the fire. There no man shall be able to excuse himself nor appeal to his excellence the Emperor: nor with apostolic letters or royal privileges defend himself against the sentence of the Judge beholding all things from eternity; Who knows with clear knowledge the most hidden thoughts and works of each accomplished in whatsoever age and hour: and that without any report being made to Him. Whose awful judgement we should all fear now: and before the day of judgement and the hour of death repent with true sorrow of heart of all our evils, and humbly crave for pardon: lest haply snatched on a sudden from this world to the judgement, we be for ever condemned with the wicked. May the merciful God grant us, now and ever to find mercy before the throne of His grace: that we may merit to be blessed with the elect: and happily brought into the kingdom of glory. Amen.

SERMON XVII

OF SHUNNING VAINGLORY AND PURSUING HUMBLE OBEDIENCE

HE that glorieth: let him glory in the Lord. Beloved brethren, if you think over your past life in the world with sorrow of heart, and how much you have offended God: in what can you glory? If also you will ponder attentively your daily negligences and divers offences; whence have you cause to glory, who are so imperfect? He who watchfully heeds his past sins, and present dangers, and strictly weighs them: can never vainly glory of his works. Which of us knows how God regards and judges our every thought, word, and deed day and night; whether He accepts, or rejects them? A man also, however good and devout he may be now, knows not how long he will remain thus: whether he will become better or worse. Brethren, if you begin to think of the hidden judgements of God, His terrible works upon the sons of men from the commencement of the world: very soon will fade away everything lofty and carnal that gives pleasure in earthly things. Whence holy David prays: “Pierce Thou my flesh with Thy fear: for I am afraid of Thy judgements.” As God is loving and merciful towards the penitent and them that fervently amend: so is He harsh and terrible to them that do ill and negligently. Do not therefore glory in the malice and wickedness of your heart: as many fools do; who stained with filth are not ashamed: but even when mocked by others rejoice and laugh. Lift your eyes to Heaven, and look upon the dignity, purity and supreme blessedness of the angels: who seek not their own praise nor the glory of another, but the glory, honour, and magnificence of God: by Whom they acknowledge that they were created, in Whom also they love one another: and most gratefully ascribe to Him all that they have received from Him

with mighty power. If therefore the holy angels are humble and grateful to God in such sublime heights: how much more man, mortal and a sinner, ought to humble himself, and cast away all vainglory. Learn, wretched and proud man, not to be high-minded, but with heart and mouth consent to the humble; that thou mayest find grace before God and the angels: which the puffed-up cannot attain, and that thou mayest not lose everlasting glory in Heaven, which the bad angels forfeited by pride. Strive to wish to please God alone in every good work: and to submit thyself to every human creature for God's sake; to obey the seniors, assist the juniors, show reverence to all: bear with gentleness the conduct of the sick and the perverse. If thou seekest to be saved, if thou wilt be made happy and exalted: follow the humble Christ, and despise thyself. For thou canst not otherwise mount up to Heaven: unless thou humble thyself with thy whole heart for God's sake. Desire not to be in the mouth of men: who with foolish praises deceive the silly lover of temporal glory. See into thy heart in truth, to how many passions it is exposed; and thou shalt not glory in thyself: nor despise thy neighbour, however poor he be and weak. Hold in mind the memorable word of Christ; and when the vainglory of the world tempts thee: answer thyself what Christ said to the Jews. "If I glorify myself: My glory is nothing." Let vainglory then depart and the praise of men for any learning or art acquired: let foolish boasting of good work or skilful discourse cease: let worldly cunning be uprooted from the heart of a religious: perish false imagining of holiness shown without: let the presumption of novelty blush, void of the fruit of charity, contrary to the peace of the community. Rejoice ever, simplicity of the dove, free from the gall of bitterness; correct thy brother in the spirit of mildness: teach rather by humble example than by subtle word. Bear with patience the adversary: whom thou canst not amend to perfection. The time will soon come, that iniquity shall stop her mouth: and the wickedness of the deceiver shall fall on his own head; and he will bear his own shame, who eagerly desires human praise: and seeks the dignity of honour. What holiness does the report of a great name bring: when little or no virtue dwells in the conscience? What devotion does wandering through divers countries bestow: which is the cause of great vanity, and a distraction of the mind? What profit does acquaintance with the mighty afford a religious; and the curious gazing at high walls and castles? In sooth all these things are made

of the earth: and unto the earth all shall return. Often also by the power of arms they are brought down to dust: and burnt with fire. Better therefore is a poor man living unknown in a wretched hut eating herbs and vegetables with a good conscience; than a rich man dwelling in a fine mansion, drinking wines and eating delicacies with mirth and pride: filled with an evil conscience. To whom may be justly applied that word of the gospel: "Thou fool, this night do they require thy soul of thee: and whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" Let no one then be glad for the vain praises of men: even if he do aught praiseworthy. Let no man trust too much in his own goodness: or foolishly presume of his own strength: or also boast of nobility of race. Let no man be puffed up for possession of knowledge; let no man boast of the dignity of superior-ship over others: let no man, trusting in abundance of wealth and revenue, think himself happy and rich, nor despise the poor; for he knows not how long he will live and possess these things: he knows not what trouble may thence come to him, when God shall so permit. In fine, in every temporal thing and human work: uncertain is the progress and good issue. For very often things fall out otherwise than men think: and often counsels are changed to the contrary. Blind men cannot see mountains on a clear day: however clever they may be. The wise in their own eyes are often mistaken concerning the future: who, trusting in their own cunning, have not God before their eyes. For those who ambition earthly things, love honours, pursue pleasures, fear misfortunes, desire prosperity, seek high places, rejoice in vanities; by a just judgement of God will mourn in their turn: and will be miserably afflicted for good things lost. Betwixt the hope of good and the fear of evil the worldly and fleshly heart is constantly tossed; because it has not set the anchor of its hope in the desire of Heaven: where all good things abound and last for ever. Wherefore, most dear brethren, since no one knows for certain what of things to come may be more advantageous for him, or more expedient for the salvation of his soul: it is safer and more praiseworthy to follow the counsel of the wise and experienced, and especially of our prelates and ancients: who have the knowledge of the scriptures, and experience of dangers from themselves and many others. For often the devil with malicious instinct: beguiles the devout even under the appearance of good. Let no one therefore be headstrong in his own desire and private fancy: nor rashly abound in his own opinion and natural gifts: but even in

small things not sufficiently well known to him let him proceed with caution: seek advice, act with deliberation, tell his motive: expose the secret wound of his mind, trust the physician: deceive not himself under feigned words: nor speak otherwise with the mouth than he holds in the heart: because it is written, “Thou wilt destroy all that speak a lie.” It is a ruling of law, he who speaks falsely gains nothing: but renders himself unworthy of all favour, and makes himself suspect to very many. It is a great and praiseworthy prudence: to renounce one’s own industry, humbly to obey the superior; to believe one more learned, to agree with one more experienced: and ever to show oneself cheerful in all good things pleasing to God. Nor is danger of error to be feared there: where the good intention of the prelate excuses the obedient disciple. Finally all religious bound to Christ may be safely advised: that all the matter of their perplexity, all desire of devotion, all study of reading, all leisure of contemplation, all the fruit of their preaching, and whatever good they may conceive in their mind: they first take care to offer to God in secret prayer; then this same humbly expose in open confession to their superior, as to the vicar of Christ: and unhesitatingly commit to them what they ought to do or leave undone. For perfect obedience ought to have nothing of its own seeking: possess neither great nor little with disordered affection: that thereby all cupidity and self-ease having been uprooted as much as possible: the soul may have a free flight to Heaven. To such a one to live is now Christ: and to die daily for Christ the greatest gain. And to be with Christ the only desire: and most blissful good. Brethren, ever hold firmly in your heart the word of the wise Solomon: who sets simple obedience with resignation of self-will before all sacrifices, saying: “Obedience is better than victims.” And again: “Do all things with counsel: and thou shalt not repent when thou hast done.”

AN EXAMPLE

There were two Devout Brothers in the Deventer Congregation engaged in study: and they were speaking together of the virtue of obedience. Said one therefore to the other, his fellow: “It has always gone ill with me: when neglecting advice I have done my own will.” Answered the other. “And I have never regretted: that I have yielded to good counsels.” I know an old

Brother who in his youth very willingly listened to the words of the elders;
but he grieves greatly of this: that he has left much to forgetfulness.

SERMON XVIII

OF THE SPIRITUAL WARFARE AGAINST VICES

WHEN you shall hear of wars and seditions: be not terrified. Beloved brethren, in this life we are in the midst of enemies: and from all sides the war to be waged against vices presses on us. Daily we are tempted and attacked: now indeed softly, at another time bitterly, but always perilously and wickedly: the devil everywhere laying snares and harassing us. For no man living is wholly free from temptations and disturbances as long as the spirit bides in the body: but everyone is forced even against his will to bear the burden of the day and the heats. Let no one therefore grow slothful in idleness; let no one think of departing from the camp of God: let no one lay down his arms before the end of the war. Let the new soldier be girded with a new sword to combat in fervour of spirit against the wickedness of the devil; let him fight bravely with the two-edged sword: having together the fear and the love of God in his mind: seeking the retirement of prayer: shunning above all publicity and sloth. For no man shall be crowned in Heaven: unless he has lawfully striven against his passions and vices in this world. The new sword is the fresh fervour of holy devotion; which at the beginning of conversion is often given by a loving illumination of the Holy Ghost to new soldiers: to enable them to battle bravely against the temptations to come. Let the novice then take diligent heed that he lose not the grace of devotion by being infected with sloth; but at all times let him make himself ready for the spiritual combat: and often pray: that he may be one of the chosen servants of Abraham, who overcame his foes armed by faith and prayer. Let him often sharpen his sword renewing his first purpose which he undertook; now meditating on the Passion of the Lord: now on the

combats and bloody wounds of the martyrs: now on the flames of the eternal fire, now on the great horror of the demons: now on the unbearable stench of the pitch and sulphur, now on the lamentable crying of the damned: now on the despair of all salvation. These things, if they come to the mind, shake off sloth: repress the concupiscence of the flesh; consume the rust of vices, reprove negligence: and mightily enkindle to spiritual progress, and the fervour of devotion. Let every lukewarm religious then fear exceedingly: let the wanderer and the dissipated restrain himself: lest he come to that place of torments, where there is no issue, nor room for mercy. But now in the time of grace, let him strive to amend his past negligences: let him cleanse the secret of his heart by humble confession and devout prayer: let him recollect himself by holy reading and frequent compunction of heart: let him curb lightness of words, by the keeping of silence; let him bring back the tranquillity of internal peace, by the forgetfulness of exterior affairs: let him drive out the intruding filth of evil thoughts, by the pure meditation of heavenly things; and to appease the anger of God more speedily: let him hold to true humility. These things appertain to manly and warlike beginners; who because of the three battalions of the enemy are bidden to stand to arms: and strenuously combat all their life against the flesh, the world and the devil.

It behoves then to fight with the help of God by being instant in prayer: by refraining from delicacies, patiently bearing adversities, as did all the saints, and especially the martyrs of Christ: who striving most bravely overcame their foes by gently enduring: and after many insults and torments, guiltlessly dying. They heeded not friends and relatives according to the flesh: nor temporal riches and honours; but the meriting of eternal rewards, heavenly treasures, triumphal crowns: and unfading glory. For by transitory torments: they deserved to pass without delay to everlasting joys. Now their souls rejoice in Heaven: who followed Christ's footsteps in reproaches and most grievous pains.

The holy confessors also strove, living soberly, justly and piously: often fasting, watching, praying, meditating, studying: groaning, weeping, supplicating for their own and others' sins: bearing contumely, detractions, mockery, murmuring, threats, exactions, losses and wrongs: persevering in a right faith, firm hope and perfect charity even unto death.

The holy and grave doctors of holy Church strove also, disputing against heretics and divers errors, zealously preaching the word of God; writing, studying, dictating books: raising questions, solving doubts, throwing light on the obscure; rebuking vices, proposing a saving doctrine, urging men to the godly and profitable; warning the simple from curious, intricate and fruitless side-issues: arousing the slothful, reproving the hardened: consoling the sad, strengthening the weak: and daily showing others a good example of life: so that what they could not persuade by words: they affirmed by holy actions.

The holy hermits and monks, and the professed of divers Orders also strove, renouncing the world: spurning the vanities of the world and the delights of the flesh, treading under foot temporal glory and honour: fleeing the tumult of men, loving solitude: forsaking their own, taking up their cross: chastising their body by abstinence, curbing the tongue by silence: shunning wanderings and discourses, doing themselves violence day after day: freely submitting themselves to the yoke of holy obedience, strictly living in the cloister under the regular discipline: imitating the apostolic perfection and for Christ's sake giving themselves to daily crucifixion: combatting with a perfect heart all inordinate affections and their own motions: keeping back nothing to themselves of all things dear, utensils, books or clothing. There is nothing in sooth more perfect, more wholesome, more profitable, more praiseworthy, more secure and more restful unto having a good conscience and peace of heart: than that the religious, devout to God and a professed monk, should every hour without contradiction, without delay, without dislike, readily and willingly obey his superior: bravely overcoming himself, humbly submitting, patiently bearing things burdensome and bitter. To keep this way of perfection is required a great struggle, against the inclination of sensuality, against the prudence of one's own opinion, against one's evil habit and the licence of the flesh, which will be subjected, ruled and restrained by others unwillingly: but seeks rather to wander, to enjoy and to amuse itself. For these things are very contrary to the law God and reason and the common peace of the brethren: and the good government of the cloister. Wherefore the simple obedient brother will be reckoned very praise-worthy and truly lovable: who with cheerful countenance and willing heart is ready to serve all after the example of Jesus Christ: keeping the law of life and discipline for the salvation of his

soul in the Order of Regulars. Again very culpable and blameworthy is the cunning brother, abounding in his own sense; who does not humbly obey his superior: showing him reverence and submission. Wo to him who unwillingly or with feigned heart obeys: and murmurs from slight cause. This one Christ, obeying His Father, sternly rebukes, and often is wont severely to punish in the present life. For He says to the rulers of the church: "He that heareth you, heareth Me: and he that despiseth you, despiseth Me." What therefore he said to the apostles, this He says likewise to their successors and to other prelates: this He addresses to superiors of monasteries also: bidding subjects obey them for God's sake, for the sake of great merit, and good example: for He will give grace and glory to all who are obedient: but to the disobedient and perverse confusion and punishment everlasting.

For the man truly obedient and submissive to the higher powers ordained by God: is compared to a wise merchant; who in every place and money market thinks of increasing his gain, and guarding against losses: endeavours to buy of good value, and not to be ensnared with worthless articles. So also the religious bound by the chain of obedience ought to think and strive in every work and business committed to him; to act faithfully, overlooking naught that pleases God: and that the superior entrusts to him. For then especially he makes progress in good, and enlarges his merit: if spurning the visible things of the world, he aims at the heavenly: if he deems it gain to his soul beyond all wealth to be submissive to the beck of another. For the fruit of obedience is better: than the thought carefully worked out of one's own prudence. And much more fruitful is the will forsaken for God's sake: than long study and perfect psaltery. Blessed therefore the religious of whatsoever Order and state: who follows Christ now by the cross and violence to the flesh always ready to obey: because in the end at his death he shall receive with the holy confessors a special reward in Heaven: as Christ promises and says in these words: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, because thou hast been faithful over a few things: enter into the joy of thy Lord." Let not then a man base and ignorant, dust and ashes to be, disdain to subject himself and obey a man who gives wholesome advice; when an angel obeys an angel indicating anything to him by a mere sign, and holy Gabriel sent by God immediately comes to announce to Mary the incarnation of Christ. But this is more to be

admired, and is set before us all as an example; that God obeyed man, served, and humbly bowed Himself to things lowly and base: that it might not be burdensome to anyone, however great, learned, or noble, to obey a greater, or even an equal or a lesser: since Christ did all this before him. For He obeyed Joseph and His Mother, leaving the Temple and the doctors, where He could have favour and honour: and He went down with His parents to Nazareth, and was subject to them: where He remained long unknown to many friends how great He was.

The holy virgins also and the continent widows bravely strove against their foes: who in the love of Jesus Christ overcame the vanities of the world and the pleasures of the flesh and the temptations of the devil in a tender age and weak sex: continuing in prayers, watchings and fasts, shunning worldly company and useless discourses, chastising their bodies, refraining from all superfluous adornment: desiring to please God alone with sincere mind and chaste body, daily preparing themselves by holy desires and interior sighs, for the heavenly nuptials; beautifying as with white flowers the bridal chamber of the heart by devout meditations, hymns, psalms, washing away the stains of the conscience with contrition and confession: and panting unceasingly with sighing and burning love for the presence of the heavenly and invisible Spouse. O sacred trophy of virgins; brave bands of maidens, widows and noble matrons: who for the sake of the love of the heavenly Spouse, and to preserve the beauty of angelic purity, despised earthly nuptials, the love of men, the patrimony of parents, the comfort of children, the banquets of acquaintance; the ornaments of dress, the splendour of gems, abundance of plate, gold rings, silver goblets, divers furniture, silk tapestry, painted chairs, the ministry of servants, the attendance of maids, the music of instruments; the sight of games, and all the pleasures of worldly joys: which this vain and frivolous world presents and flaunts before the eyes of the unwise. For these things have profited and do profit nothing to their lovers: who rejoice in perishable and foolish things, full of deceits and sorrows.

Happy therefore the band of holy virgins; who strove for eternal life to reject as dung all the joys of this world and bodily adornments: and desired rather to be made happy with the angels and archangels in heavenly glory. O truly happy assembly of maidens, who abided constant in their station: and even to the shedding of blood resisted vices and the laws of tyrants.

Therefore most beautiful crowns in Heaven adorned with precious gems and jewels: have they merited to receive with glorious praise from Christ for the victory of their combat. For who can ever worthily and fully unfold, what distresses they often endured in their heart: what temptations in the flesh: what suggestions from the demons they felt in prayer: who urged them to the pleasures of the world away from the chastity of Christ. Alas, what counsels Satan devised by the persuasions of friends: by the flattery of matrons, by manifold mockery also and terrors: to seduce them and draw them with him through fleeting delights to infernal pains. But by the pity and help of Christ their Maker, the wiles of the devil prevailed naught against the maiden battalions; nor the clamour of wicked men, nor the blows of tyrants: nor the weapons threatening death. Because the love of Christ stronger than all armour, nobler than all honour, lovelier than all beauty, sweeter than all melody: so mightily burned in the virgin hearts and female hosts armed with the sign of the cross; that they feared to suffer neither flames nor blows, nor beasts, nor prisons, nor hunger, nor death: in order to preserve an unshaken faith and the gem of chastity in a pure heart and body to be crowned with perpetual honour in Heaven. These combats then of the blessed martyrs, and long and hard abstinence of the holy confessors, and especially the chastity, patience and perseverance of the sacred virgins you ought to place before you to be imitated: and to arm yourselves manfully to resist vices and passions. I exhort all in charity: that for a shield in the combat you neglect not the intercession of the saints; that you faint not in your temptations: by the gift of Our Lord Jesus Christ the Rewarder of all the good. Amen.

SERMON XIX

OF THE DIVERS WARS AND PERILS OF THIS LIFE

THE flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh: for these are contrary one to another. Beloved brethren, in the preceding sermon you heard a little about the spiritual warfare of the saints: now consequently a few words must be said of the different kinds of war, in order to guard against the snares and wiles of the old serpent; who full of malice goes about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour: and cruelly rages in particular against young soldiers of Christ. For he envies them the glory of the heavenly kingdom: whence he fell with many on a sudden by pride. By whose pestiferous persuasion very many are deceived: and sometimes men famous in science and raised high in government have gone astray infected by vainglory: who drawn away by the friendship of men fell and were mortally wounded. But, brethren newly converted, be on your guard against two evils especially: to wit, carnal desires suddenly rushing in through the five senses of the body; and pride of mind by the desire of vain praise: lest you lose the grace of interior devotion with the reward of the eternal recompense. Our fighting, most dear brethren, is not carnal power: but the gentle suffering of all wrongs for Christ: not worldly wisdom: but humble obedience: not the seeking of bodily ease: but affliction of the flesh: not rest from toil: but the mortification of evil pleasure. If you ask how long will last these wars between the flesh and the spirit, between the devil and man, between the world and Christ: I say, according to the gospel and the apostle: until the last span of our life and the consummation of the world. For Christ said before the hour of His Passion: “My soul is sorrowful even unto death.” And to His disciples at the Last Supper: “In the world you shall

have distress. If they have persecuted Me: they will also persecute you.” And therefore encouraging them to patience and perseverance: He said to His friends grieved at His departure: “Let not your heart be troubled nor let it be afraid; for I go to prepare a place for you: that where I am you also may be with Me. But meanwhile while you are in the world: hold to patience as a strong buckler: and to the breast-plate of faith in every danger, trusting always in God.” Let us pray then, brothers, that we may find grace and mercy in the sight of Our Lord Jesus Christ: and that He may teach us the art of fighting against our passions and vices: which assault and tempt us as long as we live in the flesh and nourish the body. Let each one say with David in the psalm when he is tempted by any vice at the instigation of the devil: or troubled by a perverse man. “Lord, overthrow them that fight against me lest I fall beneath the burden: for without Thee I cannot resist or endure.” For he who is often tempted and in his temptation speedily flies to Christ and prays: will be delivered by His grace, will be strengthened and will prevail: he will progress greatly in the virtue of patience: and will receive a greater crown for his brave struggle. But he who is seldom or never tempted, nor troubled by his own or others’ malice: this one is to be called an angel rather than a man. His dwelling is more truly to be sought in Heaven than on earth. For there is supreme peace and concord: but here peace is seldom, joy brief: repose little, distress frequent: anxiety heavy, and victory uncertain. Nevertheless we must not lose heart: because for the least toil and sorrow will be given rejoicing without end.

But the multitude of our wars and the wiles of our foes, who can unfold? No one unless he be enlightened by God: and well learned in Holy Writ, as Paul who saith: “For we are not ignorant of his devices.” However, hear a little concerning the wars between the good and the bad from the sacred books for your warning and instruction; that you may be more cautious to withstand the perils of the wicked: and stronger to persevere in the paths of the just.

The first war commenced with the angels in Heaven: when Lucifer by pride wished to lift himself on high, and to be made like to the Most High: and to glory as in his own power: and to take delight in himself alone. When this was discovered in the palace of the heavenly King: St. Michael and his angels, angry at the arrogance of the haughty Lucifer, were moved with the zeal of justice: and cast out all the citizens of pride from their

bounds. For no angel, however great, should exalt himself above the magnificence of his Creator: nor being made equal himself to his Maker: nor in the beauty of his wisdom rashly glory: nor abuse the sublime gifts freely bestowed upon him by God. Since then Satan by the swelling of pride exalted himself too high vainly glorying, and raising his throne above the rest: by a just judgement of God he fell from the happy fellowship of the holy angels into the abyss of hell and the prison of the damned. Of whom the Saviour said to His disciples: "I saw Satan like lightning falling from Heaven." Of whose terrible lot, and irreparable fall: blessed John the evangelist speaks in the Apocalypse, saying: "And there was a great battle in Heaven, Michael and his angels fought with the dragon: and the dragon was cast into the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him: neither was their place found any more in Heaven." Behold how much the pride of the devil deserved: who has been cast out from the face of the God of Heaven, that he may not see the glory of God. Which doubtless he can never attain: who wishes to glory in himself. Hence also Isaias exclaims manifestly of the loss of the reprobate: "Let the wicked one be destroyed: that he may not see the glory of God." By a most unquestionable instance it is now evident, how very displeasing to God is the exaltation of the proud. Who spared not the angels in their pride: but delivered them to eternal flames to be tormented, having taken away all hope of forgiveness. Alas, how severe a sentence of the supernal judge, to be cast out from the pleasant face of the divine majesty and everlasting bliss: and ever to be burnt by most fierce flames, which cannot be extinguished by waters, nor mitigated by remedies. Wherefore each must fear because of the severe judgement of God on the proud angels damned eternally: but rather with the psalmist confess and pray: "Let not the foot of pride come tome: and let not the hand of the sinner move me." And again: "Shall not my soul be subject to God: for from Him is my salvation."

The second war commenced in Paradise, when the first man had been made: to wit, between the devil and man, between Eve and the serpent. For the devil envying man hitherto innocent, that he could obtain the entrance to Heaven by obedience to the command: approached in the appearance of a serpent, with a crafty question to the woman, whom he knew to be weaker, and more yielding than the man: and with flattering words and cunning arguments seduced her easily believing him: and not heeding the precept of

God at such a crisis. But alas, man formed right by God, and set in the most happy place of Paradise: by the transgression of the sacred precept, lost the state of innocence and the dwelling of sovereign peace: for a morsel of one most miserable apple. Therefore gravely offending God, he incurred the sentence of death, and merited much misery of body and soul: as now truly all we children of Eve experience, suffer and grieve: who by the vice of original sin, are stained, corrupted and stricken. In this war man was vanquished, tempted by an apple: who seduced by the devil's malice, and poisoned with the venom of mortal sin was pierced with many wounds: to wit, hunger, thirst, cold, heat, toil, sweat, plague, sickness, and the horror of death. Alas, he also lost Paradise and Heaven, by the fault of disobedience: through the deceit of the serpent and the folly of the woman. Who too credulous was beguiled by the devil's words in five ways in the five senses of the body: namely, through the listening to a lying discourse, through looking at a beautiful colour, through touching the fatal apple, through smelling a nice odour, and through tasting a sweet savour. But what is worse, having tasted the death-dealing food, she further seduced her husband by flattery and by giving him the unlawful fruit: forbidden them both under pain of death. But when this evil thing had been rashly done, God was angry and cast them forth guilty from the Paradise of pleasure: from the most pleasant and most restful spot of the whole world; and thrust them to do penance into the exile of this world as into a prison, to eat the bread of labour and sorrow all the days of their life: with all their children thereafter to be born of their seed. This war between the devil and man will last: as long as the human race walks upon the earth. And until the number of the elect be filled: the evil one ceases not to persecute the good, his adversaries. But nevertheless the loving and merciful Lord God compassionating fallen man: said to the serpent fatuous, envious and malicious: "I will put enmities between thee and the woman: and thy seed and her seed"; designating Christ to be born of a woman: and to redeem the human race. "She," He said, "shall crush thy head: and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel." From these words we see the wickedness and malice of the devil against us: that we are not to believe him, or parley with him, or argue with him: because he is more cunning than all living things upon the earth: and more subtle than all who study in the schools and in the affairs of the world. Beware, novices, of the head of the serpent, the beginning of

temptation: the poison of the snake lies hid under the grass: who often comes and deceives a child under the seeming of a beautiful apple rotten within. But he deceives not only the simple and laics but the learned also and famed masters and religious: suggesting to them divers vanities. He tempts almost every day by the five senses of the body: now enticing by the flesh: now lifting up by the spirit: now by making angry with wrath. Or likewise he makes men to quarrel for honours and riches: to rejoice in luxuries: or to be too much saddened in adversities and earthly losses. These are the works of the devil: who fell from the height of Heaven by pride. He made the children of Israel murmur for the fatigue and want of food in the desert: he persuaded the Jews to sacrifice to idols in the temple consecrated to God. He tempted Christ three times after a long fast: he sowed cockle among the wheat: a traitor among the apostles; a murmurer among the disciples: among the deacons a seducer, among the faithful a persecutor of the faith. He seduced Judas by theft: from theft he drew him to the noose: from the noose he dragged the miserable man to hell. There there is no redemption: nor any refreshment. Alas, all who consent to him he induces to sin against God and the neighbour: and after many evils he persuades to destroy themselves: to neglect Heaven and to love the world. Who is it that draws the monk to the world: and to the tumults of men? The devil the ensnarer of souls. Who is it that draws the cleric from the choir to the marketplace? The devil the forger of every guile: desirous of hindering the divine worship. Who is it that draws the lay-brother from labour to idleness and gossip? The devil going round the world, to find somebody wandering abroad: and toiling little or nothing for the community. Who holds down the slothful in bed: that called he may not immediately arise? The devil closing the eyes of the sleepy, that he may yet lie a little, and satisfy his drowsiness. For he rejoices over the lazy one: and him that often comes late. Who sows discords among the brethren: and begets many suspicions in them? The devil the disturber of peace, the inventor of wickedness, the father of lying, the concealer of truth, the author of guile, the encourager of partiality. Who teaches to love pleasures, to shun labours, to desire honours: to eat and drink well, to dress grandly? The devil the inciter of gluttony, the mover of wrath, the thief of chastity, the ensnarer of clerics, the tempter of monks, the harasser of virgins, the assaulter of the continent, the seducer of the innocent, the mocker of the simple, the

overthrower of the wise, the detractor of the good, the praiser of the wicked, the hinderer of devotion, the procurator of dissipation. Let it not displease you to have noted these things of the wars and thousand arts and wiles of the devil: that you observe greater caution and more strict watch against every temptation and suggestion of his whatsoever. Because as it is said by many, and frequently experienced, the devil never ceases from the malice of doing harm: nor does he suffer others to rest: but where he himself does not come: he sends his fellows to vex the little sheep of Christ. And if he cannot carry off and is forbidden to slay: at least he strives to injure them by terrors. And if he sees one wandering, and idling from good work or study or prayer; he approaches the more freely to tempt him: because he has incautiously laid down the arms that resist the foe.

A third war is called the intestine struggle, which has arisen between the flesh and the spirit; the flesh lusting against the spirit from the penalty of sin: and the spirit struggling by reason against sensuality. This rebellion the first man had not felt in the state of innocence: because the spirit subject to God peacefully ruled the powers of the body by the curb of reason. But this intestine war is most cruel and most troublesome to us all begotten and born in corruptible and sinful flesh. For what is more cruel and troublesome to every man desiring peace: than daily to fight against himself, to struggle against nature, to restrain lust, to overcome concupiscence pricking within? O servant of God, O soldier of Christ: hear a counsel good and profitable to thee. Guard thy sight: close thy hearing: touch not the unlawful: flee the harmful. And if thou feelest the goad: give not consent. Nothing so toilsome as to begin anew; from morning unto evening to stand against the three battalions: to cast the darts of prayer at the enemy; to sound the sacred trumpets, to groan in the heart, to cry with the voice: frequently to doubt of the victory of triumph. Whence unless the Lord be nigh to us: our weakness shall never be able to resist such perils. An exceedingly heavy burden and an intricate war, to nurse the flesh, to nourish an enemy, to clothe, warm, wash, dry, caress it that it murmur not, chastise it that it rebel not: encourage it that it lose not hope, rebuke it that it grow not slothful, subdue it that it be not puffed up; strengthen it that it faint not, beat it that it resist not, instruct it that it err not, repress it that it grow not insolent: love its nature as a companion, but hate its lust as the snare of death. Finally, it is not lawful to kill the flesh: no man can rid himself of it; it is not beseeming

to obey it, one must not too quickly believe it, it is not expedient to parley with it: it is generally hurtful to smile upon it. What then shall be done? Let the flesh serve the spirit, readily obey, toil, sweat, fast, rise, watch, pray, sing, and praise: until after brief labour it receive everlasting repose. This flesh therefore frail, mortal, full of concupiscence, unmastered, and often rebellious to the spirit, reason ought to rule and fear curb, dignity moderate, discipline restrain, righteousness adorn, modesty defend, sobriety temper, justice chastise when it sins: prudence instruct when it errs, discretion consider that there be naught excessive. The spirit therefore searching all things as an active pilot should carefully keep an eye on the carnal mind and youthful soul, lest it cleave to its own opinion; lest it grow slothful in leisure, or seek softness, or flee austerity: but that it quickly rise to prayer, come betimes to choir; pass readily to labour, shun idle wandering round: strictly keep silence, love the quiet of the cell; often pray, willingly study, willingly write: do each action at its due time, set the common interest before all private concerns: blush not to serve inferiors, hasten to obey superiors, joyously embrace every command; rejoice supremely to assist at the divine praises, prefer to be at leisure to God within: and deem it the better part to be entangled in no exterior affairs. Albeit then it be hard and troublesome to thee to war daily against the incentives of the flesh; nevertheless it is extremely virtuous and meritorious to resist concupiscence, and to do violence to nature: which is most viciously inclined to its own ease and the things that please it. And unless it be speedily withstood by abstention and restraint; it seduces the soul and draws it to consent: as Eve deceived Adam enticing him, and giving him the forbidden fruit to eat. In this warfare no man is overcome, unless corrupted by an evil will, and of his own accord turned away from God. For whosoever follows the desire of the flesh, quickly falls into vice unless he hold to the rein of reason. Beware then of the dangers in the daily conflict of the flesh: for as long as we live in this world eating, drinking, we are tempted in divers ways. Whence also a certain prophet, warns slothful and soft souls to watchfulness of conscience, saying: "From her that sleepeth in thy bosom: keep the doors of thy mouth." That is, firmly restrain without all the senses of thy body; lest death enter by the windows of the body to the interior of the heart: and the devil ensnare thee with his nets.

Brothers, if you do manfully and strive, and call Christ to your aid; you can certainly merit much more in this war of the flesh: than if you felt no burden within you. Have therefore always a good trust in God: and cease not to pray, and to fight against vice. Many in truth and great goods are concealed in this combat: which give pleasure to God in the weak flesh. But you shall receive great rewards with a certain hope of glory to come from the just judge, even for the least grief of heart, and pain of body however slight. All burdens also borne for the love of Christ will rejoice your souls very much at the end of your life: as a certain devout sister being in her agony said: “Up to this it has been suffering, up to this it has been struggle: now comes the reward.” What more shall I say to them that fight against their flesh? All things whatsoever that you do by virtue of obedience, or that you endure in the Order for the strictness of discipline and the love of justice, shall be written in the book of life: although sometimes the flesh may complain from frailty. But if the devil move you with some indignation, or evil suspicion against a superior giving a command, or a brother not doing well, or speaking ill: do not therefore leave aside the good begun: but rather perfect what you have commenced for the honour of God and the edification of the neighbour. For then the most wicked ensnarer and hinderer of all good, the devil, will speedily fly from you: when he is scorned and not heeded. For all his whisperings of the world, of the flesh, of riches, of earthly glory: are full of poison and deceit. Many in old age now bewail: that in youth they acted so foolishly, and offended God. Stand then and fight for your soul: in religion and in a holy congregation. For whatever ill you suffer in toils and pains, in heat and cold, in watchings and fasts, in abstinence from flesh and white-meats, in want of wine and better drink for the destruction of vice and the acquisition of virtues: all this shall be reckoned unto you for the greatest gains and rewards in the kingdom of Christ above thousands of gold and silver, and all the desirable things of the world. For what more worthy: than to be the friend of God? what more happy than to be numbered among the children of God? What more rich; than to have part in the kingdom of Christ? What more pleasant: than to assist at the rejoicings of the angels? What more noble: than to be crowned in the presence of God and the sight of all the saints? O how delightful and joyous it will be to the soul combating and loving God, to be borne by the angels into Heaven: and with Lazarus once poor to be made glad in eternal

repose, for the brief toil and slight pain suffered in the body; for the coarse clothing and tasteless food, for the hard bed and oft-interrupted sleep: for the tears shed and the devout prayers; for the holy meditations, and many other good exercises and sacred readings: accomplished in obedience and patience. O holy obedience and happy patience for Christ: which opens the gate of Heaven to him who is about to die.

A fourth war is called a domestic duel: which arose between two brothers german, exceedingly cruel and pernicious: by the instigation of the devil and the burning of envy. For as is read in the Book of Genesis, when two sons had been born to Adam, envious Cain rose up against his brother Abel, just and beloved of God: whose offerings are said to have been accepted by God. Whence cruelly moved in a wrath of fury, as a ravenous wolf he raged against the gentle lamb; and resolved to kill his innocent brother, better than himself: not fearing God, nor ashamed to sadden his parents: but excited by a malicious soul he stretched out his evil hands: and the first among men committed murder. From these two brothers quarrelling, many discords and partialities among men have arisen; in divers regions and places, in cities and towns, brawling with one another for primacy and wealth. From this occasion as rivalry everywhere increased, befell also the persecution of the wicked against the life of the just, as the holy histories of the saints show: and the divers chronicles of heathens and Christians contain, which treat fully of the wars of Trojans, Romans, and many kings and divers peoples. As it was from the beginning of the world between the sons of Adam, strife and struggle, jealousy and brawl; and especially between the miserly and the ambitious to have and increase earthly goods: so still in these days men quarrel for perishable things and vain honours. And it is to be feared that after us also these things will continue until the Lord shall come manifestly on the last day to judge all the ends of the earth. For then when Christ appears in His Majesty and glory: it shall be rendered to each man according to his works. Then all the strifes and wars of the wicked shall cease: and all scandals shall be taken away from the kingdom of God. Then shall the mouths of them that speak evil things be silent: and the bones of the saints that were humbled shall rejoice. Then shall be heard from the mouth of the just judge one final and irrevocable sentence: "Go ye cursed into everlasting fire: come ye blessed of My Father, possess ye the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." But meanwhile as long

as one generation passeth away and another generation cometh: all things are mingled together in our earth, full of thorns and briars. Now joyous things come, now sad: now hunger torments, now thirst burns; now fear casts down, now hope lifts up: now toil wearies, now repose refreshes; now health delights, now sickness weakens: and after a short while overhanging death consumes all things beautiful and pleasant. In every place then, and state, and order, the good are found mingled with the bad; the gentle with the froward, the humble with the proud: the peaceful with the passionate, the devout with the dissolute; the bashful with the bold, the silent with the talkative: the sober with the gluttonous, the fervent with the lukewarm; the studious with the idle; the interior with the extern: the simple with the cunning, the truthful with the guileful; the provident with the careless, the learned with the ignorant; the prudent with the foolish, the strong with the weak: the constant with the instable, the modest with the wrangling: and so of many other vices and manners of men good and bad, according to that of Isaias the prophet: "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb; and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; the calf and the lion and the sheep shall abide together: and a little child shall lead them." But all these things both prosperous and contrary happen with the good and the bad alike in this life by divine permission: to manifest the secret judgements of God in all His ways: that the elect may be proved and the devout purified by means of the wicked; and may not take pride in the good things bestowed on them. The bad live with the good, that by the example of the good they may be aroused to the amendment of their morals: and may not have excuse through ignorance of good life and discipline: which they see in the good associated with them. Some are very inconstant: and are soon moved to hatred or love, by a slight word or action of another. They laugh for a frivolous story; and they are angry for a passing fly. Some for recreation seek men: and lose God and the saints. It is not a slight loss: to lose the grace of devotion through over-much talking. Some speak of the ill deeds of others: and neglect to correct their own shortcomings. Some speak beforehand of future wars upon earth: but it were better that they thought of the wars against vice and how to overcome them. If eternal goods and evils were taken to heart: all things of time would speedily vanish away. Those who are of the world speak of the world; and those who love Christ, think of heavenly things: and willingly discourse to others the heavenly things

which they love. The foolish narrate things foolish and vain: and the light of heart willingly listen to frivolities. It is good, therefore, to be silent concerning frivolous things and uncertain happenings; and to commit to God all His secret judgements: without Whose Providence not even the leaf of a tree falls to the ground. Not without cause is the just oppressed: or the poor man robbed: or the guiltless slain. No man has wherewith justly to complain of God: for He disposes all things justly, wisely and providently: although Man does not understand the ways of His justice. For he who strongly sets his hope in God, stands well and shall not waver: however things may befall in this world. From whence then contentions and wars amongst men? Are they not from the concupiscence of the flesh and pride of the spirit? For the desire of money is the root of all evils. Which if it be not restrained: leads to innumerable ills. For when the good things desired are refused, or possessed are taken away: the soul becomes sad, the hidden passion of strife rises in the heart: and anger appears upon the countenance, and a hard word breaks from the mouth. In us then is the material of strife and the hotbed of discord; to wit, the desire of a thing, love of possessing, fear of losing, grief for a good lost. But the wicked and impatient man hurts himself more than others: and is harmed more by himself within, than by others without. Every passionate man is a burden to himself and a disturbance of heart: wherever he may be, whether alone or with many others. A constant and domestic strife is this of ours: for our flesh is not subject to the spirit according to the right reason of a good life; nor is the spirit perfectly submissive to God: according to His every will to please Him alone within, here and for ever. But the malicious devil cannot rest: and where he does not come himself, he sends a messenger secretly: to disturb the peace of others, or cunningly deceive them. For he either withdraws from good, or urges to evil: or suggests false for true: or makes the true doubtful. But he is deceived who believes him. What else has he to do: but to run about through the world and tempt men, and annoy the good? But those who trust in God, and speedily have recourse to prayer: are able by the help of Christ to break all his designs as spiders' webs: and ought to fear in naught the threats of the wicked. No one is more safe from the snares of temptations than the truly humble, the perfectly obedient, and poor pilgrim; who seeks no earthly ease: nor desires the goods of the world. Who is he and we will truly praise him? O how praiseworthy a virtue is

humility: which escapes all the nets of the devil. How precious and beautiful the virtue of chastity: which overcomes the seductions of the flesh with all the pomps of the world. A great virtue is voluntary poverty: whereby Heaven is bought without money. A noble virtue patience: by which are overcome all the adversities of the world. A sublime virtue obedience: to which are often subject the elements and things that seem impossible to men.

AN EXAMPLE OF OBEDIENCE

There was a certain devout Prioress in the Order of Regulars once very ill of a fever. Compassionating whose sufferings a young sister even shed tears. Who secretly entering the choir, casting herself before the relics of the saints, prayed earnestly, that the mother might be cured: and she stricken with fever in her stead. And straightway so it was. For, her prayer finished, the young maiden began to be ill: and the Prioress the same day and subsequently recovered. But the most loving mother hearing that the young one is ill: called her, asking from her what she had done or eaten. Who answered: "I have eaten nothing evil. But I thought and asked the Lord that it would be better that I should be sick for you: and you should be well." Then the devout mother with the good hope which she had in God said: "On the part of God I command thee by obedience: that thou be sick no longer." And God hearing their prayers, gave them both health to the invocation, praise and honour of His name. Amen.

AN EXAMPLE OF PATIENCE

A certain Brother questioned a pilgrim coming from afar, saying: "Tell me, good friend, what good things have you heard and seen on the way?" He answered: "I have heard the patience of the poor praised enough by many: but I have seen it imitated by few." "What more?" He said. "Amid delights I have found thorns; amid honours I have seen sorrows: and amid riches I have frequently found strifes, and great anxieties." "Is anyone free from these ills?" Quoth he, sadly. "Very few in these days. And if there are many: I do not know them. Happy, therefore, the religious, who know how to be content with a little: and desire to be honoured, or praised by no man. For God shall be their reward. For seldom do I come across such an one, as

does not grieve for his own loss: or complain for his neighbour. However, if peace is to be hoped for anywhere in this life: then the truly humble has it: who patiently bears wrongs and holds his peace.” He therefore who wishes to have peace, and a good conscience; let him forsake his own will for the love of God: and learn patiently to endure the injustice and contempt of men. For thus did Christ bearing for us the shameful cross: and obeying the Father even unto death.

PART III

SERMON XX

OF DAILY TAKING UP THE CROSS EMBRACED IN RELIGION

GOD forbid that I should glory: save in the Cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Beloved brethren, blessed Paul the glorious beholder of heavenly secrets, shows us in the above words of the holy cross, the right path of a good life; a most excellent doctrine for bearing adversity: a most firm ladder to rise to Heaven by the ever unconquered sign of the holy cross. For this leads its lovers into the country of eternal light, of eternal peace and eternal bliss; which the world cannot give, nor the devil take away. Human weakness dreads to suffer poverty, abjection, lowliness, hunger, toil, pain, distress, mockery, which things often befall, and grieve and disturb a man: but all these things joined together, sent to us by a dispensation of God, form a saving cross by manifold suffering: and open to true cross-bearers, who take up their cross, the gate of the heavenly kingdom, make ready the palm of life for them that combat: and bestow on the conquerors the crown of everlasting glory.

O truly blessed cross of Christ, which hast merited to bear the King of Heaven: and hast brought the joy of salvation to the whole world. By thee the devils are routed, the sick are healed: the fearful are comforted, the vicious are purified, the slothful are aroused; the proud are humbled, the hard are touched: and the devout are watered with tears. Blessed those who daily recall the Passion of Christ: and desire to carry their cross after Christ. Good and religious brothers standing under obedience in daily affliction of the body and in resignation of their own will have now a cross outwardly hard and bitter; but within full of sweetness: because of the hope of eternal salvation, and the inflowing of divine consolation promised to the troubled

of heart. And if they do not constantly feel this, or find that it comes but slowly; nevertheless they must await with patience: and abandon themselves to the divine will. For He knows best the time for mercy and the manner of succouring the distressed: as a physician knows the art of healing: and a master the skill of ruling and the hour for reading. Interior bearers of the cross have great confidence and reason for glorying in the cross of Jesus Christ; for they do not trust and presume to be saved of their own merits and works: but of the mercy of God and the merits of Jesus Christ crucified for our sins; in Whom they faithfully believe, and heartily love: Whom they confess with the mouth, praise, preach, honour, and bless.

God is wont to prove His familiar friends by the holy cross whether they truly or feignedly seek and love Him: and whether they perfectly keep His commandments. But they are especially proved by the sufferance of wrongs, and the withdrawal of interior consolations: by the death of friends and the loss of things: by aching of the head and injuries of the limbs: by abstinence from food and coarseness of attire; by the hardness of bed and coldness of feet; by long watchings at night, and labours by day: by silence of the mouth, and the corrections of superiors: by biting worms and detracting tongues. But amidst these things they are comforted by devout meditation on the Lord's Passion: as it has been in secret made manifest to many devout. For it is theirs to taste the honey hidden in the rock: and the oil of mercy distilling from the blessed wood of the holy cross: whose savour is most excellent, odour most sweet, touch most wholesome, fruit most happy. O truly most worthy and most precious tree of life, planted in the midst of the Church for the healing of the soul. O Jesus of Nazareth crucified; Thou dost loose the chains of sinners: dost free the souls of the saints, dost humble the necks of the proud: dost crush the might of the wicked, dost strengthen the faithful: dost put unbelievers to flight, dost lift up the pious; dost scourge the obstinate, dost overcome our foes: dost raise up the bruised, dost deliver the oppressed; dost strike the guilty, dost protect the innocent: dost love the truthful, dost hate the lying; dost despise the carnal, dost regard the spiritual: dost receive them that come to Thee, dost conceal them that flee to Thee. Thou dost hear them that call upon Thee: dost rejoice them that visit Thee; dost aid them that seek Thee: dost comfort them that cry to Thee. Thou honourest them that honour Thee: praisest them that praise Thee; lovest them that love Thee: glorifiest them that worship

Thee; blessest them that bless Thee: exaltest them that exalt Thee: Thou lookest on them that look to Thee: kissest them that kiss Thee: embracest them that embrace Thee: leadeest them to Heaven that follow Thee.

But woe to the lovers of the world, who do not heed the footsteps of Christ: nor walk by the way of the holy cross; but to fulfil their desires: heap up gold and silver: which they can by no means carry with them. Wo to the proud and great in their own eyes: who spurn the humility of the devout, deride simplicity: call poverty misery, make little account of obedience; drive patience from them, keep chastity ill: and live in a manner contrary to the Crucified. Wo to the nice and particular, who nurse their flesh too much and adorn it outwardly with raiment: and neglect their soul and stain it with sins. Wo to the avaricious and ambitious; who for earthly goods and honours labour much and often quarrel: and for heavenly goods and everlasting joys are able to do and suffer little. Therefore they often on a sudden lose the things of earth: and they gain not those of Heaven. For no man can rejoice here with the world: and reign there with Christ crucified for us. The servant is not greater than his lord nor the disciple above his master: Whom it behoved to suffer the cross, and so enter into His glory And assuredly after the most fleeting joys of this life: follow eternal lamentations. And then they shall be cruelly tormented in fire and sulphur: who now eat daintily and plentifully: and drink wine with laughter and pleasure. except you do penance.” saith the Lord: “you shall all likewise perish.”

There are mortal men who do not consider their frailty nor think of the baseness of the clay whence they were made: but glory in the nobility of their race: swell with pride over wealthy parents, are puffed up for their knowledge and art, presume of their strength and beauty: exult in power and place, are lifted up because of their ornate and diversified garments: rejoice in the publicity and fame of their name, take pleasure in the visits of friends; are saddened at the loss of their honour: are tortured at the success and promotion of others their rivals. But alas, all these things carefully examined and truly weighed: are vain, and worth no esteem: for suddenly they shall fail, and be reduced to nothing. sooth all flesh is grass; and all worldly state falls as the flower of the field, withers and rots: and becomes as if it had never been here.

There are also many others intent on vain amusements, at variance with the sign of Christ's cross: and far removed in their ways and actions from the fellowship of the saints. Who as if mad rejoice in the various shows of the world, in psalteries and citherns, bugles and organs: run and dance with their feet, clap with their hands: sing with their voices, laugh with their teeth; and for merriment of heart scarcely contain themselves in the motions of their body: because they set their supreme good in present amusements and pleasures. Which if it were lasting and acceptable to God: would be very desirable and praiseworthy. But, alas, how greatly men are deceived, both kings and princes of the people: rejoicing in the vanities of this world. For vanity is every man living, passing as a shadow: and as the dew that goeth away in the morning. O how far these are from the supreme good, from the sweetness of God, from the melodies of the angels: from the paths of the just, from the holiness of religious: and from the spiritual joy of the devout. It shall come, it shall come speedily upon them, death, before they know it, who now rejoice as if they were safe: and all amusements and song shall cease in their houses and streets. And the poor shall rejoice, and the weak and despised of this world, with all true crossbearers, lovers of Christ: who have crucified their flesh with the vices and concupiscences in this world: that they may not be condemned with the wicked in the judgement to come.

Wo also to wandering and dissipated monks, religious only in name and habit; who carry their cross with murmuring and obey unwillingly: keep their cell ill, easily break silence; shun toil, love idleness: shorten prayers, lengthen gossip: ready for exterior things, slow to interior; drowsy in meditating good things, inclined to think of evil: cheerful for eating and drinking, sorry to fast: easy in finding fault, weak for endurance; desirous of honours, ashamed of things lowly: disliking strictness of discipline, and always inclined to greater laxity. But alack, good God, that the children of this world are more prudent and eager in acquiring, increasing and preserving earthly things: than the children of light and the servants of the holy cross in gathering virtues and rooting out vices. O would that all would be wise and understand how delightful it is to be engaged in devout exercises, to search the hidden things of scripture: to meditate the words and works of Christ, often to read, often to pray, to ponder the things read and heard; daily to recall the favours of God: for all good gifts and

creatures, even for the least to give thanks to God; ever to aim at better things, to sigh for heavenly: and to drive far from the heart all the things of earth. Of how holy it is to stand in careful guard over the heart: to shut out wanderings by fervent prayer and pure meditation; to conquer the imagery of the world by the image of the crucified: to drive away the temptations of the devil with the holy cross, the nails, and the lance: to quench the motions of the flesh with thorns and cutting scourges; to bear wrongs done with a patient soul, to reckon losses and reproaches a gain to the soul: and all present burdens to weigh as most light for the love of Christ. For attentively to think of these things and the like, and to strive to put them in practice, is to take up the cross: and to glory in the cross of Christ, and not in the flesh. For from the sweet wood of the cross, a sweet odour of heavenly grace breathes; which drives away all worldly joys, quenches all delights of the flesh: keeps down elation of the heart, brings the gifts of interior comfort to the sad; affords strength to them that suffer wrong: calms anxious souls in divers ways by the words and examples of Christ.

O religious brother, why art thou sad and complainest of the weight of thy cross in long watchings, in many fasts, in toil and silence, in obedience and severe discipline: which have been profitably instituted by the holy fathers under the inspiration of God for thy progress and salvation of soul; that thou mayest walk thereby in safety and prudence: who canst not well and virtuously govern thyself. Dost think that thou in preference to all the saints shalt enter the kingdom of heaven without the cross and sorrow: a thing which Christ neither could nor would, and which none of His dearest friends and saints obtained? For He Himself said: "Christ ought to suffer: and so enter into His glory." Thou art certainly mistaken in thy judgement: nor dost thou heed Christ's footsteps shown to thee: Who by the cross passed from this world to His heavenly Father. Ask any one of the conquerors and citizens of the heavenly kingdom: how he came to possess for ever this glory of God. Was it not through the cross and suffering? Ah, beloved brethren, take the yoke of the Lord upon you, sweet and light to them that love; embrace with desire the holy cross flourishing in all virtues, full of heavenly unction: that it may lead you securely with the hope of glory unto life everlasting. What more do you want? This is the way and no other; the straight way, the holy way, the perfect way: the way of Christ, the way of the just, the way of the chosen ones who are to be saved. Walk

therein, persevere therein; endure therein, live therein: die therein, expire therein. The cross of Christ overcomes all the wiles of the devil: the cross draws to it the hearts of all the faithful; the cross destroys all evils, and bestows upon us all goods: through Jesus Christ Who hung and died thereon. There is no armour so strong nor arrow so keen and terrible against the power and fury of the devil, which he fears so much as the sign of the holy cross: whereon he made the Son of God to be hanged and slain: Who was guiltless and pure of all blemish. O truly blessed cross of Christ most worthy of all honour, to be embraced with all love, to lovers light unto bearing burdens, to the sad comforting unto the endurance of reproaches, to the penitent indulgent unto the remission of debts for all offences. This is to the holy angels very honourable; to men very loveable, to demons most terrible, despised of the proud, acceptable to the humble: hard to the carnal, sweet to the spiritual, tasteless to the foolish, tender to the devout, affable to the poor, companionable to the wayfarer, friendly to the afflicted, consoling to the sick, comforting to the dying. Store up then in the secret place of your heart all the sacred wounds of Jesus; which savour above all spices to the devout soul living in grief: and not seeking outwardly solace from men. Weigh also the sorrows of the blessed virgin Mother of Jesus standing by the cross; how many tears she then shed to intimate compassion with the many women weeping with her: that she also may be mindful of you in your distresses. Follow Christ by His Passion and cross which lead to eternal rest and light; for if now you are the companions of His tribulation: you shall hereafter be with Him fellows of the heavenly table and everlasting exultation.

Plant in the little garden of your memory the tree of the holy cross: bearing a powerful medicine against all the fatal suggestions of the devil. For the root of this most noble and most happy tree is humility and poverty: its bark toil and penance: its branches mercy and justice: its leaves truth and doctrine: its flowers probity and modesty: its odour, temperance and abstinence; its beauty, chastity and obedience: its glory, a right faith and a strong hope: its strength, magnanimity and patience: its length, longanimity and perseverance: its breadth, gentleness and concord: its height, charity and wisdom: its sweetness love and joy, its fruit salvation and life eternal. Well therefore and worthily in holy Church is it sung of the sacred cross: that no wood produces such a tree, full of leaf, flower, seed. Yea, not even

in the gardens of Solomon is found such a kind, nor a herb so powerful for the remedy of every sickness: as the tree of the holy cross bearing spices of divine virtue unto the restoration of man's salvation. This is the most fruitful tree, blessed above all the trees of Paradise; reaching out with most beautiful branches, adorned with green leaves: extended through the world in its most abundant fruits; touching the heavens with its height: penetrating hell with its depth: in its breadth embracing mountains and hills: in its greatness filling the whole earth: in its strength overcoming wicked kings and persecutors of the faith: in its piety drawing the feeble, in its sweetness healing sinners. This is the God-bearing vine, the fruitful olive: the sweet fig-tree, rough without, as honey within; planted in the house of God, rooted in humility, proved in patience: consummated in obedience, confirmed in charity. This is the beautiful palm, worthily called the Christ-bearer, borne on the shoulder of Jesus, raised on high on Mount Calvary; condemned by the Jews, defaced by the Gentiles: insulted by the wicked, denied by the faithless; lamented by the faithful, invoked by the pious: much loved by the devout, supremely revered by the religious. This was shown from Heaven to the Emperor Constantine: diligently sought by the holy queen Helena: and found with great joy. This was lovingly embraced by the same noble worshipper of Christ, watered with a tearful face: and most affectionately kissed with pure lips. This now by the marvellous dispensation of God in many places is resplendent with signs and powers: this is adored, sought and honoured by kings and princes of the world, by all the clergy and people: and is worshipped and revered with greater devotion by all the faithful of Christ for all the wounds and insults wrought it by the wicked. Nevertheless, by the hidden design and providence of God: all these things were done and ordained for the salvation of the world. This often touches the devout soul with the affection of pious compassion: often makes the tears flow when she looks upon the image of the Crucified: often wounds the heart of the lover, when he thinks of Christ wounded for him. Happy man and faithful servant he: who constantly bears the sacred wounds of Jesus in his heart: and whatever adversity befalls him, accepts it from the hand of God and patiently endures: that he may be made like to the Crucified, at least in a little. For he is worthy to be visited and consoled by Christ: who endeavours to conform himself fully to His Passion in life and in death. This is the way of the holy cross, this the teaching of our Saviour;

this the wisdom of the saints, this the rule of monks, this the life of the good: this the reading of clerics, this the meditation of the devout, humbly to imitate Christ: for Christ to suffer ills, to take bitter for sweet: to spurn honours, equably to endure contempt: to abstain from evil pleasures, to shun occasions of vice, to avoid dissipations: to mourn for his own and others' shortcomings, to pray for the afflicted and tempted: to rejoice over them that do well, to sympathize with them that endure wrongs, to succour the needy; not to desire lofty things, to choose the lowly, to love the simple: to cut off the superfluous, to be content with little: to labour for virtue, to struggle daily against vice: to master the flesh by fast, to strengthen the spirit by prayer and reading: to refuse human praise, to seek solitude, to love silence: to take leisure in God, to sigh for heavenly things: to despise from the heart all earthly things: to deem nothing his comfort besides God. This one is able to say with blessed Paul the apostle: "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." And again: "It behoves me to glory in the cross of my Lord Jesus Christ: by whom this world is crucified to me and I to the world." O religious monk and follower of a strict life: do not depart from the cross embraced in the Order; but bear and carry the cross even unto death: and thou shalt find eternal rest, heavenly honour and glory. When any trouble befalls thee, then Christ meets thee with the cross: and shows thee the way by which thou shouldst go to the heavenly kingdom. But if a man glories and hopes in the wealth and honours of this world, truly he is deceived: and he shall carry nothing with him of all the things that he was wont to love in the world. But he who glories in the cross of Christ and despises all things for Christ's sake: he again shall be comforted by Christ now: and hereafter he shall be filled with heavenly goods: and without end with Christ and all the saints shall most happily rejoice. Which may Jesus Christ deign to grant us, Who suffered on the cross and died for us: to Whom be eternal praise and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

AN EXAMPLE CONCERNING THE HOLY CROSS

There was with us a certain laic named Nicholas Peters: born in the country of Holland. He by the inspiration of God resolved in his soul to leave the world, although he was a good carpenter: and to enter our monastery. When therefore he was alone in the way and was coming near the monastery: by

the snares and temptation of the devil he commenced to be anxious and to be much afraid: without knowing what was opposing him in the good road, while the sun was still shining brightly. Standing therefore and asking himself what he should do, when he saw that there was nobody there: he began to think that perhaps the devil wanted to hinder him: to prevent him going on further to the monastery. Looking round therefore on this side and on that, he saw at a distance as it were a little black cloud rise from the earth, and gradually grow bigger and higher: and move as if driven by the wind. Being therefore very much frightened, and guessing that Satan was striving to obstruct his path, that he might not fulfil his purpose: at once raising his hand he made the sign of the holy cross: and armed his forehead with the saving sign. And so casting away fear and strengthened in a strong faith: again signing his forehead with the cross he went forward bravely. And when he had done this, that diabolical phantasy not being able to endure the power of the holy cross, and as if shunning a sharp arrow shot against it, turned aside from the path: and soon vanishing like smoke entirely disappeared. Then made very joyful he boldly entered our monastery dedicated in honour of St. Agnes virgin: which commencing at that time in great poverty was known to few. Living here many years after this, in honour of the holy cross he fasted every Friday: and even when wearied with great labours at harvest time, he never dispensed the fast of the holy cross: but most constantly fulfilled his purpose, which he had well commenced.

ANOTHER

There was a certain Lay-sister by name Margaret devout to God in the Order of Sisters Regular: who, assigned to the office of cook as a faithful Martha: strove to serve Christ and the sisters humbly, as long as she was able. On one occasion then a pan of oil had been placed over the fire which was burning: and she busied with her work was not far away. And when she saw that the oil was boiling too much and its froth rising high: fearing that it would spill and be consumed by the fire: she ran quickly to the stove. And when she had made the sign of the holy cross over it; at once the swelling of the froth subsided to the bottom: as if she had thrown cold water in.

Seeing which her companion marvelled; and afterwards made known this fact to others.

ANOTHER

A certain woman of Kempen went to the town market: to buy herself and her servants a little milk. Having bought it, she hastened to return home: holding in her hand the milk jug which she had brought with her. While on the way then, she felt a desire to drink of the milk: and bending down she sat upon the ground. And so taking the jug in her hand, she made on herself the sign of the cross before she should drink; and at once the jug cracked at the bottom: and the milk escaping to the ground flowed out in streams. Seeing this, very much terrified she arose; and thinking over what marvel had befallen her: by this she clearly recognized the power of the holy cross. And some hearing what had happened: said: “Perhaps if this woman had not signed herself with the sign of the holy cross: she would have drunk in the devil with the milk.” It is good therefore first to bless food and drink with the sign of the holy cross: lest any evil befall a man from the vice of gluttony, by which the devil too often tempts and takes many captive.

ANOTHER

Two religious Brothers having received leave were walking together not far beyond the monastery gate: to return after an hour to their cell the friend of devotion. While therefore they were talking together of different topics pleasing to them: there chimed in also from want of watchfulness over the mouth a word of detraction concerning the actions of their Prior by the instigation of the malevolent spirit. Then suddenly there appeared to them a black horse very terrible coming with speed towards them in their walk: and as if wishing to rush upon them as they conversed. And they, dreadfully afraid, at once arming themselves with the sign of the holy cross, with hastened steps fled to the monastery gate: and thus escaped the danger of the most fierce enemy by the sign of the holy cross. And they said: “We have done ill: speaking idle and detracting words of others. Therefore so dreadful a monster came upon us: that we may be on our guard in future against the most wicked sin of detraction hateful to all.”

ANOTHER

A certain brother wearied out with labour, when late in the evening he set himself to sleep: neglected to sign himself as usual with the sign of the holy cross against the fear of the foe. For overcome quickly by sleep: he did not arm himself with the sign of the saving cross. Afterwards he was so terribly frightened in his sleep by the old enemy of the human race: that he cried out with a loud voice for fear: and awakening trembled with great wonder. Then he remembered that on the previous evening he had not signed himself with sufficient care with the accustomed standard of the holy cross: and therefore the malevolent foe was so savagely troublesome to him that night. Returning therefore fully to himself, having called upon the saving name of Jesus, he signed himself with the cross; and devoutly recited the prayer of the holy cross: and so falling asleep again, he rested securely in the peace of Christ. And on account of this happening through the sign of the holy cross: he thinks that no place of the world is safe from the terror of the enemy without the cross of Christ.

ANOTHER

A certain good man saw in a dream the image of the holy cross standing near him. And first it stood before him and faced him: but afterwards standing behind him it struck him on the back and departed. Being much terrified and puzzled over this: he made known to a certain devout priest what he had seen. Who weighing the vision and not thinking it vain: said to the troubled man: "Perhaps Our Lord wishes to try you: and to put some burden on you to bear. You should make ready then your back to bear the cross lovingly with Him: for He scourges every son whom He loveth." With these words the man was consoled, trusting himself to God: Who does naught except for the best. And not long afterwards, there came upon him tribulation and the contempt of men: which the cross seen before in sleep foreshadowed. But he being carefully forewarned disposed himself to patience: and after a worthy trial he closed his life with a good end.

ANOTHER

A certain devout Brother strove to exercise himself in the Lord's Passion in preference to the other sacred books: and held the image of the holy cross in great veneration. And wherever he saw a cross, humbly bowing he took pleasure in signing himself +: mindful of his God crucified for him, Whom he desired to love and honour. One night then he saw in a vision a certain image of the holy cross hanging on the wall of a certain church: most cruelly torn with many wounds and blows. And looking upon it with exceeding great sorrow: with bowed knees and joined hands he suppliantly worshipped. And at once the image stretched out to him its right arm from the cross: and offered him its right hand. And while he wondered much at such great condescension: it was said to him: "This for the honour which thou hast shown Me on the cross." Thenceforth a very great devotion commenced to grow in his heart towards the image of the holy cross: and it became very sweet to him daily to meditate, read and pray on the Passion of the Lord.

A PRAYER OF PRAISE OF THE HOLY CROSS

O most sweet and most loving cross of my Lord Jesus Christ, exceedingly sad and bitter without: but within full of divine sweetness. O tree beautiful and bright: adorned with the members of Christ as with precious jewels. O fruitful vine: pierced with cruel nails. O lovely olive, coloured with the blood of Christ: hallowed by the water of His side. O tree of life: bearing the King of glory for the salvation of the world. O cross, impregnable buckler, incomparable standard of the King, admirable symbol of salvation: on the title-head having this writing: Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews. Hail Jesus of Nazareth, praise of the angels, life of the blessed: pardon of sinners, salvation of all the peoples. O saving cross foreseen and chosen from eternity: thou art beautified with the flowers of all virtues, thou art worthily worshipped: thou art resplendent with miracles, thou aboudest in fruits of eternal salvation: thou art redolent above all spices, thou dost heal diseases of body and soul: thou dost open Heaven to the just, thou dost bring forgiveness to sinners; thou dost rout the devil, thou dost crush hell: thou dost free captives, thou dost beatify the redeemed. O cross, tree most glorious, blessed above all the woods of the groves; thou art more lofty than the cedar, more wide-spreading than the palm, more fragrant than the

cypress, more noble than the balsam, more fruitful than the vine, more rich than the olive: more sweet than the fig, more fresh than the box, stronger than the oak: more lovely than the rose, whiter than the lily. O cross most brilliant, higher than the sun, brighter than the stars, purer than the moon: more sparkling than gems, more precious than stones, more valuable than gold, better than silver, more efficacious than the spiknard, more wholesome than all spices and medicines.

O cross most lovable, supremely venerable: be to me a sinner kind and propitious: the guide of a good life, the light of a right path; a defender from the foe; a deliverer in the awful judgement: and a loving welcomer into the kingdom above. Assist me in my agony, strengthen me in faith, grant hope of pardon, pour charity into my heart: and grant me to pass with a happy end from this world: that through thee He may receive me, Who hung on thee and redeemed me: Jesus Christ our Lord: Who with the Father.

The world praises its lovers, its mighty soldiers and barons: who have fought for their fatherland and citizens; and have manfully exposed themselves to many dangers and death: and have set the common good before all private and peculiar interests; how much more is Christ to be praised and loved Who for us all was crucified and died: that we might live for ever and reign with Him in Heaven. Amen.

SERMON XXI

OF THE VENERATION AND COMMEMORATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

THERE stood by the cross of Jesus His Mother. Beloved brethren, it is meet and in due order that after the commemoration of the holy cross, we have a special commemoration also of the grief of the most blessed ever Virgin Mother of God Mary: who faithfully stood by her beloved Son Jesus hanging on the cross: and dying for the salvation of the whole world. O tearful spectacle of the mother and the crucified Son; the mother weeping and the Son compassionating: the mother fainting and the Son addressing; the mother standing under the cross and the Son hanging on the cross: the mother sighing, and the Son expiring. O greatness of boundless sorrow, never to be forgotten: but firmly to be held in the hearts of the devout. Pilate wrote a title, on the tablet above the cross: Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews. Write thou also the same title in thy heart in letters of gold against the mockery of men and the terrors of the demons: and Christ the King of Heaven shall free thee from all the violence of the wicked. If thou dost so the Mother of Jesus Mary will stand by thee also with her prayers: that thou mayest not lose heart in thy anguish and distress. For no mother had so great a joy and comfort in the birth of her child, as this most blessed one experienced: who merited to conceive and bring forth the Son of God. No mother also had and endured so great a sadness and unbearable a grief in the death of her child according to the flesh: as this most loving Mother felt from compassion in the Passion of her most dear Son: when she stood by His cross, and pierced through with the sword of sorrow wept most bitterly.

Assuredly having beheld such pains in the Son, Whom she loved alone beyond measure above all things: it was most wonderful, that she could live longer in the body: whose soul the sword of sorrow transpierced as often: as she saw or heard her Son tormented and mocked. O truly singular martyrdom in the desolate Mother and tender Virgin: who was more cruelly tortured in her heart compassionating her Son: than any martyr hanging on the rack.

Brothers, if you love Our Lady and desire her patronage in every distress: then stand with her by the cross of Jesus compassionating her and her beloved Son from your inmost heart: that she also in turn may earnestly pray for your sins and negligences in death. For he who now thinks over and weighs with pious affection of mind often and devoutly the Lord's Passion and the tears of His most grief-stricken Mother; should hope of the mercy of God, and the kindness of both Mother and Son that they will be by him also in his need: and succour him with consolation when he lies in his last agony.

O how joyful will that soul be, which loved Jesus and Mary in its life: and every day turned over in mind the sorrowful standing of Mary by the cross of Jesus. Happy that religious who despising all the comforts of the world: has taken unto himself Our Lady St. Mary as his comforting Mother: and the protecting guardian of his whole life. Let no man doubt that the gentle and pitiful Mother, the consoler of the poor, and the helper of orphans, will willingly speak for her faithful servant setting out from this world a word good and sweet: appeasing the face of her beloved Son our Redeemer by her holy prayers, saying: "O my most loving Son have mercy on the soul of Thy servant who has loved and praised me, as Thou well knowest and hast seen: from whose mouth the holy angels have very often brought me the pleasure of a devout salutation: who also was wont to invite many brothers to praise with him Thy holy name and mine. He is our secretary writing sacred books and a lover of the holy cross: willingly praying and chanting psalms: who on hearing Thy name and mine was wont reverently to bow to us: and to greet us bending the knee. Passing by the way and seeing at a distance the cross: mindful of Thy Passion, he showed Thee reverence, bowing to the cross. Also when he beheld in a church or in any place my image painted or Thee lying or seated on my lap, or hanging as dead in my arms: at once he was moved with compassion and grieved,

wept and prayed: bowed his knees and worshipped. He never left us without a kiss of love: but all the day and night he hid in his heart the sorrows of Thy holy wounds and the weeping of my eyes: and from his inmost soul strove to compassionate me. Be mindful then of these things, my most dear Son; and grant him now to find mercy in Thy sight: while I with great urgency beseech for him with all Thy angels and saints.”

Brothers, you ought to give heed to these things now while you are in health: and have time for amendment. You should procure for yourselves now such friends and advocates to speak a good word very acceptable to God for your trespasses and debts: and to receive you into their eternal dwellings, after the dangers and toilsome struggles of this world. For you will not find more faithful friends and more powerful in Heaven and on earth: than Jesus the King of angels and Mary Our Lady the Queen of Heaven. If you are lovers of Christ, take up the cross of Christ, follow the cross: stand near the cross, embrace the cross, forsake not the cross: until you come to Jesus Christ, the true light, Who saith: “I am the light of the world: he that followeth Me, walketh not in darkness.” If you seek to be consoled in every tribulation: draw nigh to Mary the Mother of Jesus standing by the cross, weeping and sorrowing: and all your burdens will either speedily depart: or become more bearable. Choose this most kind Mother of Jesus in preference to all your relatives and friends as your special mother and advocate before death; and greet her frequently with the angelic salutation: for she loves very much to hear this word. If the malignant enemy tempts you and hinders from the praise of God and Mary: care not nor cease to praise and pray; but so much the more earnestly invoke Mary, salute Mary: think of Mary, call Mary by her name. Honour Mary, ever glorify Mary: bow to Mary, commend yourselves to Mary. With Mary abide in your cell: with Mary keep silence: with Mary rejoice: with Mary sorrow. With Mary toil: with Mary watch: with Mary pray: with Mary walk: with Mary sit. With Mary seek Jesus: with Mary bear Jesus in your arms: with Mary and Jesus dwell in Nazareth. With Mary go to Jerusalem: with Mary stand by the cross of Jesus; with Mary weep for Jesus: with Mary bury Jesus. With Mary and Jesus rise; with Mary and Jesus go up to Heaven: with Mary and Jesus desire to live and die. Brothers, if you think over and practise these things well: the devil will flee from you: and you will make progress in the spiritual life. Mary will willingly pray for you for

her clemency: and Jesus will willingly hear His Mother for her reverence. It is little that we do: but if we approach the Father through Mary and Jesus her Son with a humble and contrite heart: we shall obtain mercy and grace in this time: and glory hereafter with them without end. Amen. Happy the devout soul which has Jesus and Mary as familiar friends in this life: comrades at table, companions on the way: providers in need, comforters in tribulation: helpers in danger, counsellors in doubt: welcomers at the end. Happy the religious who deems himself a pilgrim in this world: and for his sovereign solace has Jesus and Mary in the guest-house of his heart.

Examples concerning the Angelic Salutation

AN EXAMPLE

A certain brother lost a little book in his cell: and after searching carefully a long time he could not find it. And while he grieved at its loss and gave up hope of finding it: he turned himself to prayer, calling upon the Blessed Virgin by the angelic salutation. When therefore he had commenced to recite as usual the Hail Mary and had repeated the same often, and meanwhile thought with sorrow of the little book: of a sudden there came into his mind this inspiration: as he sat near the bed praying before a picture of the Blessed Virgin Mary. "Seek here before thee under the straw of the bed." At once he stretched out his hand to the bedstead: wishing to try whether anything was hidden there. And lo, lifting the straw a little: he soon touched the book with his hand and drew it forth. And seeing it he wondered, and kissing the little book for joy, he gave thanks to God: and hastened to pay the Blessed Virgin the angelic salutations promised her. And he said: "Perchance Our Lady wanted to have some Hail Marys: and therefore thou couldst not find the little book so soon." It is good then often to recite the Hail Mary: and devoutly to call upon the Mother of Jesus.

ANOTHER

A certain brother writing books in his cell: by the wiles of the devil was troubled with a bad thought. Feeling this and being angry with it, he rose at once, to go out of his cell: and escape this annoyance more speedily. But before he went out, by an inspiration from God he looked at a picture of the Blessed Virgin, which he had by him: and was wont to greet out of

devotion. And so at once he knelt down: and with joined hands began devoutly to recite the Hail Mary. And lo, divine grace came to his aid at once; our loving Lady Mary succouring him: with her noble blessed offspring. For having commenced and recited attentively the angel salutation; when at the end he had said, Jesus Christ, Amen: immediately he felt within him the power of God, and peace from all disturbance. Astounded therefore at the speedy answer to his prayer: he recognized in this instance, the great utility of the angelic salutation: against every assault of the enemy whatsoever. And giving thanks to God, he said within himself: “Now I know truly: that Our Lady St. Mary is mighty to aid and deliver all that cry to her.” But on the following night: this vision appeared to him in his sleep. For it seemed to him, that he was passing alone through the orchard. And Satan coming towards him: commenced to terrify him and drive him back. And he frightened from his face: began to run, to escape his hands. And as he did not dare to go outside the monastery bounds: from his hasty running he suddenly fell into a ditch of water into the mud at the bottom. Fearing therefore to be drowned since he saw nobody there to help him and draw him out: he began to recite the angelic salutation within himself and to pray for aid. And as soon as he had said Jesus Christ, Amen: he was snatched out of the deep pool of water, and set again upon dry land. Then being made exceedingly joyful, and as if delivered from the snare of death: he awakened and came fully to himself. Raising himself therefore on his bed, he began to weep for joy: and in thanksgiving he recited with attention very many times on bended knees the Hail Mary. He added also these words: “Hail sweet Mary Our Lady full of grace: the Lord is with thee gate of mercy.”

ANOTHER

Two brothers Regular were going together to the upper country: for the pious purpose of visiting relatives and friends faithful in Christ. It befell them therefore to wander a little from the right path. And so the elder said to the younger. “Brother, it seems to me we are going out of our way: let us return again to the high road.” Returning then to where they were before, the senior began to pray and to call upon the Blessed Virgin: to send them a guide for the right way, and a traveller of good companionship. And while

he was now reciting some prayers with hymns and collects of the Blessed Virgin: behold there came towards them a certain man in the guise of a pilgrim, carrying with him a staff and a satchel on his back for provision on the way. And having greeted the brothers: he said that he was going up country to St. Quirinus for the indulgences, and that he would willingly accompany them. Quickly therefore they followed this guide of the right way for the space of a long journey: until they came to the wished-for place of their lodging. Then the elder recognizing that divine help had come to them, strove to render most ample thanks to God and the Blessed Virgin for the guidance of the good road: mindful of the word of St. Peter the apostle, saying: "Casting all your care upon Him: for He hath care of you."

ANOTHER

A certain brother when in trouble: had the habit of calling upon Jesus and His most loving Mother Mary. And when he was tempted by any bad passion or sadness; at once he had recourse to the Lord's Passion by the angel's prayer: calling upon Jesus and Mary to aid him against the temptation. One night therefore he saw in sleep the devil coming towards him: and intending to injure him. And as he feared to be hurt, and could not run away: he began silently to recite the Hail Mary. But when the other had heard Jesus named: at once he turned away from him, and commenced to flee and to run quickly. And seeing this: the brother cried still louder after him. Jesus, Jesus. And the louder he cried: the more quickly the devil ran, terrified by the sound of the sweet name of Jesus and of Mary His Mother. And suddenly falling he disappeared. Seeing this the brother awoke for joy of heart: and said: "If with one Hail Mary I can put the devil to flight: what have I now to fear."

ANOTHER

There was with us a certain laic named Egbert an old man and of advanced age: devout to God and the Blessed Virgin, and a fervent lover of holy poverty. He laboured hard according to his strength, digging the earth, and carrying it; and while sweating in toil, he used to think over the sorrows of the Lord's Passion: and when weary from labour for the relief of his body he gave himself to prayer. This man was long tempted by Satan to leave the

monastery, and to go through the world begging: thinking that this would be more pleasing to God: and because he had many comforts here of which he was unworthy. But from this opinion he was withdrawn by the advice of the Prior and the warnings of the brothers, lest he should expose himself to danger: and wandering through the world finally go astray. For often the cunning tempter deceives the simple under the guise of a better good: and draws them from the good they have undertaken by change of place, to inconstancy of mind. And while he was still very little satisfied to remain: and yet did not dare to go away rashly without permission: amidst these temptations he had recourse to the Blessed Virgin through the devout advocacy of her prayers. One day then wearied from toil, he lay down to pray near his barrow: as he was very often wont to do, invoking Our Lady and calling on Jesus by name. While then he lay prostrate on the earth alone: he was lulled to sleep a little by a gentle sleep in the Lord. And he beheld a most venerable Lady standing by him: and saying these words in loving warning: “You should abide in this place: and what the Prior advises you and says, this do.” And when she had spoken thus, the noble Lady at once disappeared: and he coming to himself and awakened wept most plentifully. Then he went in all haste to the Prior: and related to him in order with sobs and tears the things that he had seen and heard. To whom the Prior as a good shepherd consoling his sorrowful sheep replied: “This please me well, dear Egbert. Abide with us: as Our Lady has just showed and told you.” Nor did he long survive after that; but persevering with much patience in obedience, to receive eternal rewards for short toil: with a good end he fell asleep in the Lord during matins on the octave of St. John apostle and evangelist. Anno Domini, 1420.

SERMON XXII

OF THE PRAISE OF THE MOST SWEET NAME OF JESUS: AND OF HIS MOST SWEET MOTHER MARY

BY spirit is sweet above honey: and my inheritance above honey and the honey-comb. Worthily, indeed, and very beautifully, brethren, the words of eternal wisdom are referred to the Mother of mercy of whom arose the sun of justice Christ. Sweet is Jesus, sweet Mary: and there is not in them any bitterness: but supreme gentleness, mildness, love, and mercy without measure. Blessed he who cleaves to the steps of the humble Jesus, and devoutly turns himself to His Mother: to find favour in their sight. Gather together then, most faithful servant of God, into one bundle the actions of Jesus, what He did and said: and they will profit thee more than all the treasures of the world. Go over also by thyself with earnest mind the acts and words of the most holy Mother of Jesus: and they shall be comforting to thy soul: and most sweet above all spices. The body receives pleasure from sweet odours, and is refreshed by the remedy of food: but the soul is nourished, strengthened and rejoiced by true virtues and holy meditations. But the more perfect studies one pursues, and the more noble masters one follows: the more clearly he learns: and the more speedily he arrives at the summit of blessedness. Sovereign masters of virtue, and lights of all holiness are Jesus and Mary; whom thou shouldst set before thee according to the measure of thy littleness: and look upon as if present. Join thyself to them: show thyself attentive and devout to them. Wherever thou hearest anything said concerning Jesus and Mary: there diligently lend thy ear: there tarry long: and weigh what edification and hidden sweetness there be

within. As often also as thou comest to perform the Divine Work: or when thou art called to the common labour, or to some private task: first raise thy eyes to Heaven, and especially call upon Jesus and Mary: and suppliantly commend thyself to their constant protection. Offer thyself also to their good-pleasure in everything that is to be done; that thy action may be pleasing to God: profitable to the neighbour, and wholesome to thyself. Let thy intention be always pure: let thy goodwill be fervent: let thy work be discreet, thy speech circumspect: thy performance persevering, unto the praise of the holy name of Jesus, and the honour of His blessed Mother. Here commence to praise, venerate and love: that hereafter thou mayest merit to reign with them: and for ever with the holy angels to praise, bless and proclaim them. The praise of Jesus is sweet and beautiful: the praise of Mary lovable and bright. When joyous therefore praise, when sad pray: for they are worthy of all praise: and constantly to be invoked at all times. The more frequently thou exercisest thyself in their praise; the more shalt thou grow in their love: and the stronger thou shalt become in the grace of devotion. They will never be unmindful of thee: if thou art never unmindful of them. And if thou neglect them, which God forbid; or behave thyself ill, which may God keep far away: or grow lukewarm in the devotion which thou hast commenced, which may God not suffer: it will be needful to scourge thee with meet chastisement, and to bring thee back to right mind by adversity: that thou mayest learn to converse with God with greater care: and to guard grace bestowed with greater watchfulness for the future. And then be mindful of these benefactors: and bewail thy negligence and great ingratitude: which thou hast foolishly committed. Happy he who merits to hear the admonitions of Jesus in spirit, to amend himself unto better: that thereby after bitter tears, he may be again rapt into sweet ecstasies. For the loving kindness of Jesus surpasses all the sins of the world: and the indulgence of Mary can never be exhausted.

O if thou couldst make much progress in the love and praise of Jesus: and serve worthily and devoutly His blessed Mother Mary. But what wilt thou do since thou art not worthy to call them by name at all: seeing that thou art a man weak, lukewarm and careless, in many things also frequently offending? How then shalt thou praise: since praise is not seemly in the mouth of a sinner? For it is seemly that the holy should be praised by the just and worthy. Must thou keep silence then or say something? Woe to thee

if thou dost not praise: and woe to thee if thou dost open unworthy lips. What shalt thou do to find mercy; and not to incur offence? Naught is better to obtain the goodwill of the most gentle Jesus and of the most pitiful Mary His Mother, than that thou humble thyself in all things: and bow thyself beneath all, and set thyself in the lowest place: truly entertaining unworthy and lowly sentiments of thyself: and bringing thyself back to nothing if thou hast felt anything good. Thus shall God be appeased: and Jesus shall have mercy on thee. Mary also shall pray for thee: and thou shalt be comforted in thy lowliness. Thou shalt not be ashamed from their face: but thou shalt receive plentifully rendering canticles of praise. And if thou canst not praise worthily, do what thou canst: give what thou hast. For the pious intention will refresh thee: until thou becomest more rich to render better service. Those who are great and very devout praise magnificently and devoutly: but those who have little oil: let them willingly offer even this to the Son of oil and the Mother of grace. It seems that one ought to be silent because of the surpassing glory and dignity of the glorious seed of the Virgin Mother: but since Mary does not spurn the little and sinners, she will mercifully admit thy shouting in the crowd of them that praise: as the holy Prophet says: "The poor and needy shall praise thy name." Therefore a little should be said to arouse devotion: and if not very elegantly: nevertheless of a more humble kind and more ready affection according to the measure of strength.

Who are the most sublime in Heaven; and the most lowly on earth? Are they not Jesus and Mary? Jesus made Himself a servant: Mary called herself a handmaid. The charity of both the whole world has experienced; their worth the citizens of Heaven proclaim: the host of angels worship. O if thou couldst be among them: and with untiring voice praise together the sweet name of Jesus and of the most sweet Virgin Mary. O how good and pleasant it is to serve these: who have served us both faithfully and humbly. Ye sons of men serve the Lord: Who has very often deigned to serve you. Serve ye the Mother of God: who has shown you an example of holy service. O how befitting it is to honour these sovereign patrons: Who can aid more than all others: through Whose hands the judgements of Heaven pass and are fulfilled. Every hour then we should beseech them, who protect us from the foes of body and mind: and bestow everlasting bliss upon their clients. In every need whatsoever have recourse to Jesus and Mary; unfold to them all thy burden: confess thy faults, bewail thy guilt.

Seek forgiveness, seize hold of penance; take up hope again, promise amendment: and trust well in the help of grace. If thou fallest easily: take care to rise the more speedily. They willingly grant the prayers of the suppliant, they spurn not the groaning of the poor: yea even the holy angels shall rejoice over thee, when thou shalt be converted with thy whole heart from all deformity of sin: and shalt take up a better life according to the pattern of Christ, and of the Mother of blessed Jesus. Do thou be only on thy guard against offending: and they will not refuse the protection desired. Do thou show due reverence: and they will have a most sure care of thee. Amen.

A PRAYER

To Thee O Lord Jesus and to Thy most holy Mother the Virgin Mary: I entrust my soul and my body to be guarded unto life eternal. O my only hope Jesus and Mary: in every distress and anguish may your loving-kindness succour me. You are my most powerful Patrons: worthy of love above all the saints. I have not, poor as I am and a pilgrim in this world, friends so faithful and dear of all that are dear and known to me: as I trust in you.

SERMON XXIII

OF THE DEVOUT SERVICE OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN AND THE REMEMBRANCE OF HER NAME

BY memory is unto everlasting generations. Mary is the friend of poverty, the way of humility: the pattern of patience, and in all things perfect. From the beginning of the birth of Jesus she led a life of poverty: and unto its issue on the cross, she constantly held to patience. Let it please thee to follow her: to honour her with humble and devout service is befitting: and daily it behoves to weigh: what mark of thankfulness and special love should be most earnestly paid. Thou wouldst willingly rejoice with Mary in Heaven: bear also willingly poverty and contempt with Mary upon earth. Behold her humble ways, and her maidenly modesty amid her companions: and restrain thy levity, and shun tumult. Beware of displeasing Jesus and Mary by vain words: and unworthy actions. For it is not a light thing: to displease such dear Patrons. They see everything thou doest; and as thou showest thyself in amendment: so wilt thou experience them in thy aid. However their wisdom surpasses thy malice: and their indulgence brings thee to repentance. If thou dost recognize thy faults: change thy state unto a better. Persevere in good: and devoutly render thanks to God for His blessings. Thus did blessed Mary when she was filled with the Holy Ghost: and bare Jesus in her womb. Learn by the example of her mildness to bear piously the troubles that befall thee: and submit thyself to the divine ordinance, as it was ordained from eternity. Jesus will be thy helper; Mary will be to thee a faithful Mother: be thou a good son and a devout servant ready for ever good work.

Dost thou wish to do what is pleasing to the blessed Virgin?

Be humble, patient: sober, bashful, chaste.

Be fervent, mild: intern, of mind devout.

Go seldom forth: read, write, and often pray.

The service of Mary should not seem long, or burdensome. It is delightful and joyous: to serve such a Lady with heart and voice. For it shall not be without notable recompense: whatsoever little thing shall have been performed in her honour. The lowly Mother does not spurn little services; the loving Virgin willingly accepts small offerings: when they are offered freely and devoutly. She knows that we cannot give great things: nor does the pitiful Lady, the meek Queen demand impossibilities of her servants. That noble nature cannot refrain from pity for the needy: which brought forth mercy for the whole world. O how graciously she receives them that faithfully serve her: who has so frequently converted by her admonitions, and by evident miracles men who were living miserably in the world. How many would have been eternally damned, or would have bided obstinate in despair: if the most gentle Virgin Mary had not interceded for them with her Son. Meetly then is it said of her, that she is pitiful to all the wretched: and the help of all sinners. She does not seek, or need what we have: whose beck the heavens obey. She loves our good when she exacts service of us; she desires our salvation: when she requires that we pay her praise. And when she sees that the memory of her name is celebrated; thence she seeks an occasion to do us good: for she delights to repay her servants. She is most faithful to her promises: and most generous in her gifts. She is full of delights: and ever enjoys the harmony of the angels. Nevertheless she takes pleasure in the service of men: that the honour of God and the salvation of many may thence be more abundantly procured. She is moved by the tears of the wretched, she compassionates the sorrows of the distressed: she succours the perils of the tempted: she bows down to the prayers of the devout. If a man readily and humbly has recourse to her, and calls upon her sweet and glorious name: he shall not depart from her empty-handed. She has many who cleave to her; and the choirs of the angels obey her: and these she can send to the solace of the destitute. She commands the demons, that they presume not to trouble anyone: who submits himself to her dominion and charge. The evil spirits dread the Queen of Heaven: and they flee when they hear her holy name, as from fire. They fear the holy and

terrible name of Mary: which to Christians is most lovable and ever glorious. They dare not appear and are unable to exercise their wiles: where they know that the name of Holy Mary shines forth. As if a thunderbolt had fallen from Heaven, they are overthrown at the sound of Holy Mary; and the more often it is uttered, and lovingly invoked: the more speedily and the further are they put to flight.

Again the holy angels and the spirits of the just rejoice, and are glad over the devotion of the faithful: that they so lovingly and earnestly celebrate the memory of Holy Mary: whose honourable name is shown forth in all the bounds of the churches: which have been especially dedicated to her name. And it is befitting and meet, that in preference to all the saints of God the Mother should be honoured by the dwellers of earth: whom the world of angels worships with highest praise. The name of Mary then is to be venerated by all the faithful, ever to be loved by the devout, embraced by religious, commended to the people, preached to sinners: suggested to the afflicted, invoked in all dangers. For she is the nearest to God and the most dear to the Son of God her Child the blessed Jesus; able faithfully to intercede for all the tearful sons of Adam: that He forgive their sins, and succour them in their perils. For when the occasion presents itself, she does not delay to whisper a good word in the ears of her Son: and to implore mercy for the needy. And she shall be most speedily heard in every cause entrusted to her, for her singular reverence: for her loving Son Jesus the Author of the salvation of the human race, honours her denying her nothing. Wherefore let all the faithful and devout desirous of escaping the shipwreck of the world, and of reaching the harbour of eternal salvation: fly to Our Lady St. Mary; whose unspeakable kindness tastes to the wretched most sweet, and cleaves to them most strongly: so that rightly may most abundant confidence be placed in her. Truly from infancy mercy grew up with her; nor hath it left her in Heaven that now she should be unmindful of her poor: but it has filled her most plentifully and sweetly. And although she be the highest of all, and encompassed with most blissful joys: nevertheless she is not forgetful of her lowliness: whereby she most worthily merited to be raised above all. And therefore does she know how to bow graciously to her least servants: rejoicing to become the advocate of the miserable: and to be called the mother of the orphaned. Amen.

SERMON XXIV

OF THE SORROW AND CONSOLATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

YIELDED a sweet odour: like the best myrrh. The examples of the dear Virgin Mary: are to be recalled by thee with utmost love. For she as choice myrrh brought forth sweet-smelling fruit in patience: and was most pleasantly refreshed with most plentiful comfort of divine sweetness. A most mighty comfort thou also shalt find: if thou bearest the name of Mary grafted on thy heart. For thou shalt have many good things: if thou art well with Mary. The love of holy Mary drives out all heat of carnal concupiscence: and brings the refreshment of chastity. The love of holy Mary makes one despise the world: and serve Christ in humility. The love of holy Mary preserves from all evil companionship: and trains unto the purity of religious life. Love then holy Mary: and thou shalt obtain a special grace. Call upon Mary: and thou shalt gain the victory. Honour Mary: and thou shalt have an everlasting reward. Two benefits in particular are obtained: by the frequent bringing to mind of the holy life of Mary. In prosperity she teaches thee to praise God from thy inmost heart: and in adversity to keep thyself patient. She without interruption praised God most highly for blessings received: which she had received from Him in a manner more excellent than all others. She ever showed herself mild in the distresses of this world: and chose rather contempt than prosperity. She spent no day without grief: but yet she was not without great consolation amid her anguish. For every tribulation accepted for Christ brings sweetness and joy; and the more frequently a man is stricken by the blows of adversity: the more he merits to be enriched with mightier gifts. For the blessed Virgin grieved vehemently for the errors of the world and the

malice of many: she compassionated the truly penitent and the hard tried. She grieved for the great ingratitude of men, to whom God the Father sent His only begotten Son made man for love: that they might return to the Paradise lost of old through Adam. She grieved for the loss of the wicked who refused to hear the word of God: who loved the world rather than Heaven: and sought after false riches rather than true virtues. She grieved for the oppression of the innocent and the violence of the evil: for the despising of the poor and the uplifting of the proud: for the negligence of divine worship, and the transgression of God's commandments. And because the whole world was seated in wickedness: and few disposed themselves to see the eternal light which had enlightened the world: the Mother of supreme love abounded in occasions of compassion. Herein she was most patient, leading a life full of martyrdom: pouring out tearful prayers with sobs for the salvation of souls. And if thou wilt consider further what and how much she endured in the persecution and Passion of her beloved Son; thou shalt find in sooth that she drank as many cups of bitterness in life: as Jesus had moments of age and wounded members. For when did Jesus suffer any desertion and rejection by men: and she did not faint away with compassion? If she sorrowed when she lost Jesus for an hour; how much did she weep when she saw Him crucified and die? It is known to the lovers of Jesus: for the affection of the Mother in compassion surpassed the usual measure of the devout. Therefore if thou desirest to feel the strength of the grief in the Mother: think of the vehemence of the love in the Virgin.

Again no one can express the joy of Mary: no one can grasp the abundance of her sweetness and the greatness of her consolation: for there is greater joy and consolation there: where there is wont to be a fuller infusion of grace and a more frequent visitation of God. Hence also ever arises a more ardent affection of divine praise: and the state of the whole interior man is renewed. Heavenly grace does not suffer a holy soul loving God above all to live without interior consolation: but it continually lifts her to things above, and wisely enlightens her in her actions; it enkindles her in holy meditations: and renders her devout in giving thanks. But the greater the grace, and the more stainless the life: the more joyous the conscience, and the more devout the prayer of praise. For this manner of life cut off from earthly tumult, and held back by no desires of things below, daily

longs to be set in the heavenly choirs: is lifted above present things: and burns to enjoy the unceasing glory of the sovereign Trinity. Which glory no one of the saints tasted so purely in this life, as the blessed and glorious Virgin Mary: who became the most ardent in prayer of all them that contemplate and bless God.

Do thou also even now imitate the Mother of God, hearing the recital of her praises: that thou also mayest merit by the prayers of the Virgin Mother to be classed in the number of the devout. Strive earnestly to follow the most holy Mary in the aforesaid footsteps of virtue: unto the attaining of the palm of heavenly glory. Be much saddened also for thy past negligences, and the shortcomings not yet overcome: whereby thou hast offended God and all creatures. Thou didst act wickedly in the world: thou hast lived lukewarmly in the service of Christ; and therefore thou shouldst first mourn over thyself: then by charity over the neighbour. Pity therefore the danger of them that live ill: whom eternal punishment threatens, unless they repent of their sins. Many do ill and know it not: many more recognize their wickedness: and yet do not amend. For these must thou grieve and pray: that God may give them the spirit of compunction unto salvation. Pray also for friends and benefactors, for thy adversaries and detractors; that to the pious may be given worthy grace, to the hateful a good thought: and to all the peace of Christ with mercy. Pray that all may love God, and keep His commandments: that rational creatures may glorify their Creator: for whose sake God wrought all His wonderful works, and emptied Himself: humbly subject to Mary and Joseph. Again be thankful for the divine blessings most worthily vouchsafed to the whole human race through the most holy Mother of God: rendering her also reverence and honour. For since the law of nature bids us show always reverence and love to the parents of the flesh; much more should the children of the Church be thankful and devout to the Mother of grace: and love the Mother of God above all kinsfolk and acquaintance.

It behoves thee also to learn with Mary to rise to God with joyous praise; and faithfully to trust on her patronage, not to confide in thy own strength: that thy mind may not be kept back in things below weighed down by passions; but that daily enkindled with fresh desires it may freely rise upward: where with Jesus the King of angels the glorious Queen of Heaven, the pious Virgin Mary happily reigns. But alas, human weakness compels to

come down afresh into this vale of tears: after a brief taste of divine consolations. And then again it is needful to cry to the Mother of many mercies; that she may whisper to her Son that thou hast no wine of fervour: but that thou dost need the sacred ointment of devotion, to praise Him with due reverence. For she has care of the poor and despisers of the world: and of the despised in the world for the sake of Jesus and the gospel of the kingdom. And therefore it is very profitable to know the place of refuge from the face of the enemy: where thou mayest be protected from the sharp arrows: where thou mayest lie hid from the cold and the storms of tribulation. There is no safer place to hide than the bosom of Mary: nor a horse more swift to escape the hand of the pursuer: than the prayer of faith sent into the castle of our royal Lady Saint Mary. For Jesus also Himself entered this castle: taking thence the sacred members of His body, to fight the prince of darkness. Do thou therefore also enter under the shelter of this fortress; praying day and night to be delivered from all threatening evils by the merits of the most holy Virgin: hiding securely under the most ample and most lovely mantle of Our Lady. For when holy Mary prays: the whole wicked crowd shall be put to flight. When Mary aids: thou shalt escape all dangers. There the poor man has his dwelling: there the sick finds a remedy: there the sad finds solace: there the troubled receives counsel: there the destitute obtains help. Well will it be with thee and very well: if thou prove thyself so worthy and obedient to the good pleasure of holy Mary; as to gain her favour now: and glory with all the elect hereafter. Hold her and do not let her go until she bless thee: and lead thee by a happy guidance to the palace of Heaven. Amen.

SERMON XXV

OF THE EXCELLENCE OF THE MERITS AND OF THE PRIVILEGES OF THE GIFTS OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

MANY daughters have gathered together riches: thou hast surpassed them all. Beloved brethren, be faithful servants of Jesus Christ: and devout lovers of His most holy Mother the Virgin Mary: if you desire to rejoice with them for ever in Heaven. Then shall you be dear to God and His blessed Mother: if you be humble of heart and chaste of body: if in all your manner of life modest, provident, God-fearing and prudent, you give no man occasion of scandal: or of just complaint. It is much for your salvation, for the honour of God, and the praise of the blessed Virgin, that you be devout in prayer; studious in reading, strenuous in toil, quiet in the dormitory: watchful in choir, cheerful in singing, amenable in Chapter, docile in receiving admonition: strict in silence, sober in refreshment, guarded in the eyes: and disciplined in all your ways. If therefore you desire worthily to praise the blessed Virgin, and supremely to venerate her: then be as simple children of God without malice, without guile: without wickedness, without lying; without anger, without quarrelling, without murmur, without suspicion: bearing all that is contrary to you in brotherly love, with humility and patience, for the sake of Jesus and Mary, and of imitating the life of the saints; for the sake of your own peace and the edification of others: and especially for the sake of enjoying the glory of the holy Trinity. For all bitter things become sweet: all burdens are lightened: when the love of Jesus and the memory of His loving Mother penetrate to the interior of the

heart. If anyone desires to prove this: let him of them often think, speak, read, sing, and pray.

But that you may realize a little the most excellent worth of the most blessed Virgin Mary: hear a few of the many gifts and privileges, wherewith God has blessed and exalted her above all the holy angels and archangels in Heaven: and above all men on earth. This is the most sacred Virgin and the most dear Mother of God: of whom in holy Church spread throughout the world we sing: “The holy Mother of God is exalted: to the heavenly kingdoms above the angel choirs.” Recall therefore diligently the doings of old of the holy patriarchs: of whose stock sprang the Mother of God Mary as a rose without a thorn amid thorns. For as in former days by many holy men, patriarchs and prophets, by judges and kings, by priests and levites Christ the Son of God was foretold as one Who should be born of a Virgin for the redemption of the world, and suffer on a cross: so by divine ordinance very befittingly and wisely the most blessed and most devout Virgin Mary was foreshadowed and preconized by the holy maidens of that time, by illustrious women, by chaste widows, by devout prophetesses, and by the other religious women living in chastity: and for the protection of their modesty enclosed with their maids from the sight of men in their homes and chambers. She is in truth by the witness of the holy Scriptures the Virgin most prudent of all virgins, of all women the most bashful, of all maids the most beautiful, of all matrons the most venerable, of all ladies the most lovely, of all queens the Queen most noble; in whom all maidenly beauty, all moral virtue, all theological speculation, all loving devotion, all activity of virtue, all perfection of holiness, unite, indwell, and most abundantly shine forth: who has not, nor had, nor is to have, her like before her, or her equal after her. And as of old the material temple of Solomon was adorned above all the temples of the earth, and most widely renowned and most richly endowed, was honoured with magnificence by kings and peoples; so the spiritual temple of God, which is the blessed Virgin Mary, pure from every stain, shines above all the temples of the saints: and therefore should be more fully honoured and loved.

O truly renowned offspring nobly shooting forth from the glorious stock of the patriarchs: magnificently issuing from the priestly race: most worthily descended from the pontifical dignity: most truly foretold of the choir of prophets: most illustriously born of the royal family: most directly

sprung from the lineage of David: most splendidly generated from the sublime tribe of Juda: most happily begotten of the people of Israel: singularly forechosen of the chosen people of God: most peacefully coming forth for the light of the world by divine pre-ordinance from parents holy and religious and pleasing to God. O happy and spotless Virgin Mary, most worthy of all praise and honour: to be embraced by all with all love and reverence. O glorious gem of virgins, thou from the beginning and before the ages wast pre-ordained by God, to bring forth the Redeemer of the world in the time decreed: desired by the patriarchs, foretold by the prophets: adopted by many kings and just; long awaited by the most devout people of Israel: and at length openly manifested to a sick world by God in His mercy. O sacred and most illustrious Virgin Mary: how noble and praiseworthy is thy name in the whole earth. For from the rising of the sun even to the going down in divers parts of the world, by Jews and Gentiles, by Greeks and Latins, by Romans and Germans, thy name has been proclaimed through the gospel of Jesus Christ thy Son; and still daily thy noble name is preached in all the churches of God, in chapels and cloisters, in fields and groves dedicated to God, by the little and the great, by priests and doctors, and by the preachers of different Orders: who all in unison desire to praise and expound thee. For even to the stars of Heaven to raise thee, and above the dignity of the angels to praise aloud thy holiness and beauty all the spirits of the just are eager and glad: and for greatness of love and sweetness of devotion singing, praying, meditating and celebrating thy holy solemnities they weary not: according to that word of Wisdom: "They that eat me, shall yet hunger: and they that drink me shall yet thirst." Praise and glory to the most high God: Who has rendered thee, O Mary, the greatest grace above all the daughters of men in the world; and now has set thy seat near the throne of thy Son in the heavenly kingdom, in a place most sublime, above all the choirs of angels and saints, most beautifully prepared for thee from eternity: and most happily to remain to thee for ever.

O supremely venerable Virgin Mary, Mother and Daughter of the eternal King: to be blessed by the mouth of all, to be revered with every honour: most white in virginity, most profound in humility, most fervent in charity, most mild in patience, most full in mercy; most devout in prayer, most pure in meditation, most sublime in contemplation: most sweet in compassion, most prudent in counsel, most mighty in aid. Thou art the court of God, the

gate of Heaven, the garden of delights, the well-spring of graces; the glory of angels, the joy of men, the pattern of morals, the brightness of virtues, the light of life: the hope of the needy, the health of the sick, the mother of orphans. O Virgin of virgins, all sweet and beautiful: brilliant as a star, red as a rose: shining as a jewel: bright as the sun and the moon in Heaven and on earth. O meek Virgin, innocent as a lamb: simple as a dove; prudent as a noble lady: serving as a humble handmaid. O holy root, lofty cedar: fruitful vine, most sweet fig tree, most wide-spreading palm: in thee are found all good things: and by thee eternal rewards are given us. We should all fly to thee then as children to their mother's bosom, and as orphans to their father's home, as long as we live: that by thy glorious merits and prayers we may be defended from all evils.

But now listen to the words of a certain doctor, concerning the twelve stars in the crown of the blessed Virgin: wherewith Our Lady St. Mary is resplendent above all the saints in Heaven. "These twelve stars are the twelve prerogatives of her brightness in reigning: which she has with respect to all other citizens above. For with regard to the Church militant: she has four special most brilliant gifts full of the works of mercy. For beyond all the others she listens more kindly, condescends more humbly; acts with more power, succours with greater frequency: as experience teaches in the difficult affairs of the Church. So also with regard to the Church triumphant: she has these four eminent prerogatives. For above all the others she is set higher in Heaven, she shines with greater brilliancy: she is loved more fervently, she is honoured more fully: as it is meet to think of her glorious merits. Again with respect to the holy Trinity, which beatifies: she has likewise four prerogatives or stars brighter than all constellations. For beyond all the others who contemplate the glory of the eternal Trinity, she beholds the holy Trinity itself more clearly: she is drawn to It more joyously, she contemplates It more intimately; and above all in Heaven she enjoys It more happily: of which things no one should longer doubt."

But hear further what of those stars saith blessed Bernard, the special lover of the blessed Virgin, the sweet doctor and devout instructor of monks. "On her head," he says, "a crown of twelve stars. Who shall value these gems? Who shall number the stars: of which the royal crown of Mary is composed? It is beyond man to expound the manner of this crown: to show its formation. We however, in the measure of our littleness, abstaining

from the dangerous scrutiny of mysteries: may perchance not unseemingly understand these twelve stars as the twelve prerogatives of stars, wherewith Mary is singularly adorned. For we find in Mary the prerogative of Heaven: the prerogative of the flesh, and the prerogative of the heart. And if this number three be multiplied by four: we have haply twelve stars, wherewith the diadem of our Queen shines above all. For the first brightness flashes upon me in the generation of Mary: the second in the greeting of the angel: the third in the coming upon her of the Holy Ghost: the fourth in the ineffable conception of the Son of God.” I leave it to your diligence to examine each single point more attentively: but for me let it be enough of many words to have quoted to you a few. If anyone wishes to know more fully the mystic sense of the stars: let him read that sermon of blessed Bernard, beginning with the theme: “A sign appeared in the Heaven,” etc.

These things therefore, beloved brethren, for singular reverence and love of the most blessed Virgin Mary often revolve, ruminate with the mouth: and for giving of thanks most joyously sing the hymns and canticles of joy on her feasts and commemoration throughout the year. But especially before the altar of God and in presence of the image of the blessed Virgin bare your heads and bow: humbly bend the knee, as if you saw Mary present in the body speaking with the angel, or holding her Son in her bosom: and then lifting up your eyes with good hope of the salvation for which we look, most lovingly implore the help of mercy from the Mother of mercy, and say: “O most merciful Mother of God Virgin Mary, Queen of Heaven, Mistress of the world, joy of the saints, solace of sinners, heed the groans of the contrite, fulfil the desires of the devout: succour the necessities of the weak, comfort the hearts of the distressed: assist the agonizing, protect thy suppliant servants from the harassing of the demons: bring thy lovers with thee to the reward of everlasting blessedness: where with thy most loving Son Jesus Christ thou reignest most happily for ever. Amen.”

SERMON XXVI

ON THE FEAST OF ST. AGNES, VIRGIN AND MARTYR

OF THE THREE LOVELY GARMENTS OF MOST BLESSED AGNES, VIRGIN

THE Lord hath clothed me with the garment of salvation: and with the robe of gladness He hath encompassed me. Beloved brethren, these words are recited and sung of the holy virgin Agnes, the noble spouse of Christ and our glorious patroness: whose festal day in the yearly cycle we must solemnly celebrate: and implore her glorious suffrages with devout prayer. And may she deign to pray for us all, who is greatly loved by Our Lord Jesus Christ; and most favourably regarded in His eyes and by His most sacred Mother Mary: when she petitions for any pious cause. O may she not forget now to pour forth her prayers so devout and acceptable to God in the heavenly kingdom; as formerly she wept and prayed for the Prefect's son who had perished miserably: whom she raised from the dead by the gift of the grace of Christ. Mark therefore the words quoted above in the beginning of this sermon: as if you now heard them with your own ears from the mouth of the most blissful Agnes. Consider the loveliness of the garments of the most noble virgin: wherewith Jesus Christ her heavenly Spouse clothed and adorned her within rather than without. For she was worthy to be clothed by Christ with the garment of salvation, and to be decked with the robe of gladness: who spurned all worldly adornment, and for the love of her immortal Spouse shed her blood: and cheerfully accepted precious death for eternal life. There she now rejoices with her most loving Spouse and the holy angels, with the most glorious Mother of Jesus and numberless bands of maidens, set in the higher choirs of the virgins; following the Lamb whithersoever He goeth, and singing the sweet canticles of joy given

to virgins only to sing: which surpass the music of all organs and the melody of all minstrelsy. Moreover she merited to have this prerogative on earth: that the memory of her most blissful name should be venerated with never-ending praise in the Church, and most devoutly celebrated: and should be magnificently honoured by all the faithful of Christ. For truly great and holy doctors often commend, eminently praise, openly preach; and relate as an example to us all of lovable chastity the story of her passion and exhort with sublime encomium noble youths and maidens to love Christ.

But let us see now the lovely garments of holy Agnes: wherewith she is resplendent above all the raiment cunningly wrought by man. For very precious and beautiful are the robes, wherewith the souls of the saints are decked interiorly: which Christ brought to the world from the treasury of Heaven: when born of the Virgin Mary of a royal race for our salvation. Now there are in particular three kinds of garments, woven by the skill of the Holy Ghost: which Christ gave to St. Agnes His spouse as a present: so that she might love no other wooer but Himself alone: nor look upon, nor admit to her speech: lest haply he should lessen, or darken, or extinguish her love: which would be most unbecoming, and would especially hinder the devoutness of her prayer.

The first garment then wherewith most blessed Agnes, one of the wise virgins, was clothed is a long white robe: brighter than glass, more spotless than fine linen, whiter than the snow. And this is called inviolable virginity: dear to God, agreeable to the angels: most venerable to men. This holy garment, pleasing to God, from her childish years, yea from the very cradle did the most chaste Agnes put on, and preserve unspotted: who in the very beginning of creeping babyhood was offered by her parents to God, and espoused to Christ with the ring of faith: so that she could never be torn from the love and espousals of her heavenly Bridegroom by any reasoning, or power, or threats or flattery: but she remained a virgin for ever: and for faith and chastity hesitated not to die. This garment has at the bottom a golden hem cunningly worked by the finger of God: whereon are contained the honied names Jesus and Mary, as also the noble names of all the other holy virgins, befittingly inscribed in alphabetical order; examples to follow the blessed footsteps of Jesus Christ, and of His blessed Mother the ever Virgin Mary: for the blissful obtaining of heavenly glory.

The second garment is red or purple, coloured with the precious blood of the Lamb without spot Jesus Christ: and brightly adorned with numerous white flowers. And this is called unconquerable patience: or unwearying constancy. On this robe are found all the symbols of the Lord's Passion, and the holy stigmata: which also are seen imprinted on the loving soul by the goad of interior sorrow at the four corners, before and behind. Now these are signs of divine love: and a shield of invincible patience against the shafts of the devil: namely, the holy cross, the nails, the lance, the rod, the cord, the pillar: the white robe and the purple: the gall, the reed, the spittal, the scourges, the thorny crown: and the other many insults and cruel wounds. This garment also has a hem of silver, deep and broad: that is, a faith right, enlightened and strong unto death: whereon are discovered written in the colour of the rose the names of all the blessed martyrs, in Greek, Latin and Hebrew characters, according to the alphabetical order; which when diligently examined and read: encourages the distressed and tempted soul unto bearing all the adversities of this world. With this noble and purple robe was clad Our Lord Jesus Christ the King of Martyrs and the Spouse of Virgins in His happy and blessed Passion, bearing the crown of thorns and the purple garment for our salvation: to strengthen the hearts of the weak in their tribulation for whatsoever insult or wrong done them: that after short and passing distress in the world: they may merit to receive an unperishable crown in Heaven. For every tribulation patiently borne for Christ: brings a certain hope of reigning for ever with Christ. This holy and royal robe Christ gave His beloved bride, the noble maiden St. Agnes, at the time of the persecution of the Christians in the holy Roman city: that she might follow the footsteps of His sacred Passion; bear the insults and threats of the wicked with great constancy for the faith and for chastity: after the example of many martyrs and innumerable maidens, slain without cause for the name of Christ. For whose praise-worthy triumph and unspeakable glory: holy Mother Church now praises Christ and rejoices magnificently throughout the whole world. Happy the soul which struggles manfully against intruding vices: and often sighs, and prays amid divers perils and burdens: to be speedily delivered from all stress and misery.

The third garment of St. Agnes is a golden mantle made of silk throughout as a veil of virginity: which encompasses, covers and decks the whole body of the virgin. And that it may shine the more brightly and

please the beholders, it is interwoven and ornamented with many brilliant pearls, with many precious stones and sparkling gems. And this more noble than the other robes is woven by the skill of the Holy Ghost; and it is called fitly and justly by the men of learning and understanding undying charity: of which it is said by blessed Paul: "Charity never falleth away: whether prophecies shall be made void, or tongues shall cease: or knowledge shall be destroyed." With this robe was clad most blessed Agnes: when questioned of her Spouse, as to who He was, she faithfully replied: "I love Jesus Christ, Whose chamber I have entered: Whose Mother is a Virgin: Whose Father knoweth not woman. Whom when I love I am chaste, when I touch I am pure: when I receive I am a maiden." This charity is supremely necessary for the adornment of the robe of virginity: for without charity virginity cannot please God: neither also shall the proud virgin be numbered among the wise virgins: who has not the oil of charity and of fervent devotion in the lamp of her heart. That therefore the virginal robe may shine brightly in the sight of God and the angels: the lover of chastity must guard herself from all pride of mind, and dissoluteness of mouth: lest haply deceived by negligence of interior things and concupiscence of the eyes for exterior things, she very much displease the eyes of the heavenly Bridegroom. Therefore let her hold all her senses and words in every place and at all times strictly under religious discipline: and attribute the whole good of chastity faithfully and entirely to God: Who has deigned to bestow upon her so chosen a gift unto the beauty of her soul. Moreover with great humility and daily supplication let her longingly seek from Christ: that she may constantly persevere even unto the end chaste, sober and modest, as becomes a virgin of Christ; and that she may be able to overcome all the lusts of the flesh, and cast away all worldly cares, as long as she subsists in this frail body: for she lives in the midst of foes and many perils. This charity is also very needful for the adornment of the second virginal robe, which is called unconquerable patience: for patience without the charity of Christ does not profit unto salvation and the merit of life eternal: even if a man bear the tearing of wild beasts, or fire, or sword, or the torment of the cross. For suffering does not make the martyr: but the good cause makes the holy martyr; who suffers for the faith of Christ, or for justice, or for chastity: and especially for the salvation of souls. Now Christ bestowed these three precious garments upon most blessed Agnes in sign of His

exceeding love and perpetual espousals; which she very gratefully received: and with great joy adorning herself within said: “The Lord hath clothed me with the garment of salvation: and with the robe of gladness He hath encompassed me.” And again: “The Lord hath clad me with a mantle wrought in gold: and with large jewels He hath decked me.” Clothed then from Heaven in these sacred garments, and protected as by a triple buckler: the most blessed maiden the youthful Agnes went forth, to fight against the three battalions of the devil; to wit, against the delights of the flesh, the riches of the world: and against the threats of wicked men. Thanks be to Almighty God, our most mighty helper, the King invisible, and the immortal Spouse, the Creator of all things; Who strengthened the heart of the maiden that she might conquer: guarded untouched the body of His bride; preserved unharmed the innocent lamb amid the flames: and so strongly enkindled her heart unto the love of His most holy and honied name: that she chose rather to die, than break troth with her heavenly Spouse: Whom she had vowed herself to serve by an everlasting bond. O truly admirable constancy of the maiden: O how praiseworthy the patience of holy Agnes: who amid such great temptations and persecutions, amid so many clamours, derisions, flatteries, terrors, and armed men brandishing their swords, held to the purpose of virginity; and feared not to acknowledge openly before her foes that Christ was her Bridegroom: but with great constancy describing in terms of praise many wondrous things of the nobility, of the beauty and power of Christ her Spouse, cried saying: “I am espoused to Him, Whom angels serve: at Whose beauty the sun and the moon marvel. To Him alone I keep troth: to Him with utter devotion I commit myself.” And rightly, indeed. For He alone is the true God, mighty in Heaven and on earth: seated above the cherubim and seraphim He beholds the abysses and the secrets of the heart. He regards the humble: and the proud He knows only afar off. He does not accept the person of man: but in all keeps a right judgement: giving to each truly that which is due. He knows all things from eternity: and with supreme providence He rules all things. He tries His elect in many ways, and rewards them richly for much patience in Heaven; but the wicked on account of their malice He severely punishes and condemns: preserving in all this great mercy with full justice. To Whom be everlasting praise and glory: for unending ages of ages. Amen.

SERMON XXVII

OF THE GOLDEN CROWN ON THE HEAD OF MOST HOLY AGNES, VIRGIN

AND as a bride: He hath decked me with a crown. Beloved brethren, now hear a little, if it please you, concerning the crown of the most holy virgin Agnes, wherewith Christ crowned her in Heaven. The crown is an ornament of the head and a sign of very great dignity: which is due especially to kings and to the sons and daughters of kings because of the nobility of their birth; or also to certain great personages in token of victory, or learning, or holiness: or exceeding virtue. Whence of the holy martyrs in particular we read and sing: “A crown of gold upon his head: set as a sign of holiness.” But who shall worthily describe the beauty of this crown? Methinks that no mortal man can know it, unless he to whom God reveals this mystery: or he who by His grace attains the kingdom of God after death. This golden crown surpasses all the glory of this world and the splendour of both kings and princes, and the mitres of both nobles and prelates; for it is not wrought of earthly material: but prepared in the heavenly workshop by God, it shines with ever fresh brightness. And what better and more worthy for our fancy can we understand by this crown; than Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself the giver of eternal glory? For He is the essential reward and crown of all the saints: the beginning and end of all good things. He is supreme happiness, supreme bliss: supreme beauty, sovereign sweetness. He is eternal truth, eternal wisdom: eternal goodness, eternal majesty. He is the most pleasant source of life; Who by His presence rejoices and inebriates all the citizens of Heaven: in mercy saves and crowns; by grace justifies and enlightens: by glory beatifies and satisfies. He draws all things to Himself, fills all things by Himself, exalts above all, and most superabundantly recompenses;

giving to each a golden penny for his few labours: and for a brief struggle a golden crown to be possessed most fully with the angels in life eternal. To have this crown we ought all to toil and strive to overcome: as all the saints before us have done and have overcome; who now reign with Christ: and bear on their heads crowns of triumph for the hard labour of the conflict. Who however do not attribute to themselves the victory over the enemy; but with all reverence and gratitude lay down their crowns before the throne of God in the presence of the Lamb: and with boundless exultation and harmonious voice chant and say: "Blessing, brightness, wisdom, praise, honour, glory, salvation, virtue, victory to our God for ever: Who hath led us through many tribulations to the happy obtaining of this glorious crown." This golden crown with its aureole most blessed Agnes merited to receive abiding firm and constant in her passion for faith and chastity; giving herself up to death: that she might receive a crown of glory, never to be forfeited. What more lovely than this crown, what more pleasant, what more sublime, what more blissful; than most clearly to contemplate the King of angels with all the saints in Heaven?

O virgin of Christ despiser of the world, who hast chosen to serve Christ in chastity: rejoice in the hope of the glory to come. If thou desirest to wear a golden crown in Heaven; bear now Christ always in thy heart: always in thy mouth, always in thy work. Turn thine eyes away from the world: lift up thy soul to Jesus in Heaven. Be fervent in His praise, humble and vile in thine own eyes; frequent in prayer, ready in service, prudent in word: patient in pain, silent in reproaches, cheerful in contempt; simple in raiment, modest in manners: guarded in all thy ways. Do not neglect Christ in any work or moment of time under Heaven: Who never turns His eyes away from thee in whatsoever place thou mayest be. Look upon St. Agnes as if dwelling in the body: and showing thee an example of chastity. So holy, so chaste, so devout, so modest, so dignified, so guarded was most blessed Agnes in this life: that she did not lift her eyes to the idols of the gentiles, or to the spectacle of their games: or to the glittering of gold or silver: nor did she covet the beauty or the friendship of any mortal man; but bearing God in her mind, holding Him by faith, loving Him with her heart, praising Him with her mouth: with the whole desire of her soul she raised her eyes constantly to Heaven; where she knew was Christ her Spouse, the

best treasure of her heart: One to be loved and embraced above all things desirable.

Therefore in order to excite still greater devotion, let us take pleasure in contemplating the beauty of the crown of most blessed Agnes: which decked with lovely flowers affords wondrous delight to chaste minds. For it has three silver circlets in honour of the holy Trinity: containing three garlands woven of flowers of most beautiful colour and sweetest odour. He who has ears to hear: let him hear and understand what these things mystically signify. Maidens rejoice in lovely dresses and flowers; soldiers in golden armour and shields: clerics in books and studies, monks in hymns and psalms; seculars in worldly things, princes in luxuries: spiritual men in things divine. But no delight is greater and sweeter: than to exult in God and in works of true virtue wrought to the honour of God. Leaving aside then things dangerous and perishable: with the chaste and sacred virgins let us examine with our inner eyes the unfading flowers in the crown of most blissful Agnes.

The first circlet contains a garland of white flowers and pure lilies: begotten and born in the valley of humility. These flowers designate holy and devout meditations on the Incarnation of Jesus Christ born of the pure and holy Virgin Mary; wrapped in clean swaddling clothes, placed in a narrow manger, suckled at her virginal breasts: honoured by angelic praises, visited by devout shepherds; made known by a brilliant star, sought, found and worshipped by holy kings: worthily venerated by the same with three gifts, the presentation of gold, incense and myrrh; embraced by holy Simeon in loving arms: by the widow Anna with heart and mouth supremely blessed and praised. In all these good things heard, read and meditated what else is found: but a garden full of flowers and lilies with many sweet herbs? Truly all these shine, flower, glow: are brilliant, sweet smelling and delightful. These flowers of the nativity of Christ and the ever virginity of blessed Mary His Mother have so sweet an odour, so wondrous a taste: so great a beauty, so strong a heat, that they drive all temptation and carnal love from the languid soul; all anger and wrath, all envy and pride: all sloth and luke-warmness, all hardness and trouble; all sadness and distrust, all wickedness and deceit: all turpitude and diabolical suggestion; whether from man or woman, whether from youth or ancient, whether from rich or poor: because for all was Christ born, for all He suffered and was

crucified; that He might save all, cleanse all from sins: and deck them with the flowers of virtues.

And in this garland there are five lilies very necessary to virgins for the safeguard of chastity: to wit, modesty, silence, sobriety, solitude and the cloister. These strongly guard the virgin's court: and render her crown more bright. Listen O virgin to a virgin: commending holiness. "The virgin," he saith, "thinketh on the things that are the Lord's that she may be holy in body and in spirit in Christ Jesus Our Lord." Who is this Jesus, Whom holy virgins so love: as to leave even their parents? This is Jesus of Nazareth, the only-begotten of God the Father, the Son of the Virgin Mary, the Spouse of Agnes: the lover of chastity, the guardian of virginity. He is the comforter of the poor: the protector of widows, the receiver of orphans: Who speaks to virgins in the Cantic of canticles. "I am the flower of the field and the lily of the valleys: I am the visitor and indweller of holy minds." Wherefore, virgin of Christ, if thou wilt worthily please the heavenly Bridegroom: strive to have within virginal flowers and pure lilies: and to guard all thy senses from deceptions without. Beware of the hawk, O simple dove: flee the wolf, meek little lamb: beware of the serpent approaching thee, chaste maiden: lest by the windows of the body he enter the chamber of the heart: and the purity of thy conscience be corrupted by heedless sight or evil hearing: or by thy other senses always prone to evil. Therefore the greatest care must be taken with regard to places, persons, times, conversations, greetings, gifts: laughter, joking, sight, adornment, banquets, vain songs.

These and many other blandishments has the world: which alas it offers its lovers who run with blinded mind to the torments of hell. O foolish joys of the world: after which follow eternal lamentations. For all things beautiful and pleasant shall perish without delay: when the hour of death shall have come.

But these earthly and carnal delights are poisonous to virgins: they are to be dreaded by the modest, shunned by the devout: hated by religious, very greatly feared by the young: severely chastised in the older and the careless. For the true disciple of Christ and lover of chastity hides herself from the sight of men lest she displease God: lest she lose the comfort of the Holy Ghost lest haply it prove a danger and a stumbling-block to herself and others: and she become the laughing stock of the devil, who was the companion of angels. Therefore the more closely confined she remain in

watchfulness and the discipline of the Order: the more beautiful lilies shall she have in her halo and golden crown. And when the virgin recluse, intending and desiring to please God alone, has removed and cleansed herself from all worldly cares and gossip: then by the breathing of the grace of Christ the sweet odour of a good life as the odour of myrrh and incense shall be shed from her: and many daughters of Sion still given to the world, hearing of the holy life of the enclosed nun, will be encouraged also to leave all the vanity of the world for the sake of Christ: to attain with the virgins the beauty of the golden crown. O how wisely dost thou act, daughter of Sion: who spurnest the perilous world; resolvest to espouse and ever to cleave to the King of angels: and hastenest to enter to the heavenly nuptials. Enter, enter the cloister of virgins, where thou mayest learn to do the will of the Lord thy King: and make ready thy heart watching with thy companions, praying and awaiting the blessed coming of thy Bridegroom from Heaven. Assuredly if thou dost persevere in what thou hast begun: it shall be without doubt as thou hast often longingly besought of the Lord thy God.

The second circlet of this golden crown contains a garland woven of red flowers, beautiful to see, delicious of odour, wondrous to hear, comforting to the heart. These roses designate chastisement of the flesh, contempt of the world, compunction of heart: and holy meditation with affection of intimate compassion towards the Passion of Our Lord. These roses grow amid thorns and briars and nettles: that is, amid divers temptations of the flesh and vexations of men; who disturb others now by harsh words, now by evil conduct: and often trouble the devotion of the peaceable man. Woe to them: and well is it for those who suffer annoyance from the perverse. These roses therefore are called red or purple: because they bring pain and blushing to bashful minds. Nevertheless they give forth a sweet fragrance, if they are roughly bruised: because humble minds answer sweetly and lovingly, when they are reprov'd and despised by the passionate: and they render the greatest thanks to God: that they have deserved to be wounded and pricked by the thorns of their neighbours. These roses set over the fire and burnt, give forth a sweet water profitable for medicine; likewise the mild and humble enkindled by the fire of the Holy Ghost piously intercede for the injurious and the envious: and often pour forth tears with groaning. Truly great are the merits of the patient, great the trophies of virgins; great

with God and illustrious are the honours of the continent: to whom an eternal reward with a crown of gold, more brilliant than all the stars, shall be rendered in Heaven. O virgin meek and humble: very much canst thou merit in distresses borne for the name of Christ. For as often as thou dost patiently endure a harsh word or injurious action; so often dost thou beget and bring forth red roses from thorns: and addest fresh lustre to thy crown. These roses are found in great plenty among the holy martyrs and the virgins dedicated to God; who armed with faith, enflamed with love, and girdled with patience, shed abundantly for Christ their rose-red blood: and rejoicing in sovereign glory have merited to receive eternal triumphal crowns, brilliant with roses and lilies. Whence we read of St. Tiburtius a noble martyr of Christ; that commanded to walk barefoot upon live coal: he trusting in the Lord Jesus approached without fear: and making the sign of the cross stood upon the glowing embers unharmed: and with joyous soul replied to the judge: "In the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ, I seem to be walking upon rose blossoms: for the creature itself obeys the command of the Creator." Hence also of St. Dorothy a noble virgin and martyr it is most beautifully related: that praying a while before the hour of her passion she merited to receive from the Paradise of her heavenly Spouse Jesus Christ three most lovely roses with three sweet smelling apples: which by a child of angelic beauty she graciously sent to Theophilus a philosopher who had mocked her and an unbeliever. And when he saw them, he was converted and became a believer; and burning with the heat of faith, speedily following Dorothy by the palm of martyrdom, he joyously entered Paradise: as the beautiful bride of Christ Dorothy had promised him.

Let no one then despair of gaining those blushing roses: as if they were set afar off and were difficult to find. For they can be diligently sought and profitably found by all Christians and especially by religious and devout persons both day and night, both winter and summer: but they must be kept with care. For in reading the Passion of Christ and the sufferings of the holy martyrs, red roses are sought in the Church books: in meditation and prayer they are found: by living justly, soberly, chastely and piously they are gathered and preserved. And these red roses are to be sought more in time of trouble near the mount of Olives in a garden apart from the crowd: which Jesus and His disciples entered to pray. Who then taken by the Jews, bound, buffeted, scourged, crowned, crucified, wounded, and bleeding as it were

from all His body: appeared more ruddy than any rose, dyed and empurpled with the red of His own precious blood. O how many red roses did the most meek Jesus bring forth from each of His bruises and wounds; sweeter and more lovely than all spices. For the more often these roses are beheld, the more roughly they are bruised, the longer they are revolved in the mind: the more mightily they give forth odour, sweeten, flower, redden, grow and dilate. For the roses of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, brought forth in the rosary of His Passion and crushed by the Jews in Jerusalem as in a mortar, surpass the sufferings of all the holy martyrs and virgins: in worth, greatness, sweetness, beauty, and fullness of all graces, from the rising of the sun, even to the bounds of the whole world. And these roses are very precious and suitable and lovely to deck the crown of every devout soul; so that they cannot be valued at any worldly price, or bought of merchants: or found in the stores of physicians. Where then can they be seen and obtained? Not in the market, but in the choir: not in the square, but in the Church: not in warfare, but in the cell: not in tumult, but in silence: not in laughter, but in mourning: not in feasting, but in fast. However they are found especially by despisers of the world who daily take up their cross, and very soon by those who seriously meditate upon the Passion of Christ: and they are very plentifully gathered during Mass. For they mightily refresh sorrowful souls: and comfort those that are cast down by adversity. But it behoves the devout soul to have a great watchfulness over herself: lest the cunning thief the devil come of a sudden into this garden of roses with his most wicked lies: and if he find the casket of the heart open, take thence the sweet roses of Christ: and silently cast in instead fetid nettles and black coals. Where is Jesus now, where the cross, where the nails, where the lance: to drive the malignant foe from thy casket? Arise and watch: cry and pray: call upon Jesus, worship the Crucified. Mark thee with the sign of the holy cross against the foe of all virtue: seize the spear of the soldier Longinus against the terror of the raging lion: shut thy heart against the poison of the serpent: strengthen it with the three nails of the Lord as with three strong bolts: that so easy an entry to the secret of thy heart may not lie open to the cunning and rabid enemy.

The third circlet contains a garland woven most beautifully of blue and emerald flowers: sweet-smelling above all the herbs of the field, full of heavenly mysteries. For rightly do these flowers pertain to the beauty of the

virginal crown: which keep purity with virgins. And if they are well understood: they aid not a little the virtues of religious: who have utterly forsaken earthly things. Therefore the blue flowers which have the appearance of the colour of the sky, designate the contemplation of heavenly glory and the great desire of the perfect and recluses: who forgetting all lower and perishable present goods, meditate the eternal: and ceaselessly pant for the presence of God and the fellowship of the angels: where all things are quiet, pleasant, and perfect. These often enkindled in prayer desire with blessed Paul to be loosed of the bond of the body; and with Elias to be carried to Heaven in a fiery chariot: and happily to be presented to Christ in His Kingdom; where they may ever rejoice and feast in the sight of God: praising and singing with the holy angels without any hindrance or fatigue the sublime praises of the sovereign Trinity unto everlasting eternities. These flowers, to wit, meditations of heavenly joys, greatly adorn the crown of every sacred virgin and faithful soul heartily loving Christ: and eagerly thirsting for God the living fountain. These sacred flowers are chiefly found and read in the gospel meadows and gardens of the Saviour: in meditation on the joys of the Lord's resurrection, and ascension, and the coming down of the Holy Ghost: and on the miracles gloriously wrought by the apostles of Christ in the primitive Church in the name of Jesus. In like manner from a special devotion flowers of heavenly gladness are gathered on the various feasts of the most blessed Virgin Mary, and on the festivals of other saints: when there is concerning them in the Church devout singing, reading, and celebration: and longing thought on the eternal glory of the saints. For so often do flowers of heavenly brightness arise, grow, and sweeten in the contemplative soul suspended in God: as often as the mind is touched and enkindled by the memory of heavenly glory: and sighs and pants for the presence of Christ and the saints. Whence often from fervent desires it looks upward: and from the inmost heart cries out with Elias and prays: "It is enough for me, O Lord, take away my soul: for better is one day in Thy courts above thousands of the joys of this life." But again it is to be considered that these noble roses then fall from the crown of the devout soul, are soiled and wither: when the mind commences to take pleasure in vain and curious things below, or is frivolously occupied without: and weighed down by a certain sloth, neglects to meditate on heavenly things which are ever preferable to visible: and

better than all the treasures of the world. Whence also blessed Paul encouraging his disciples on to the flower-bearing fatherland says: "Seek the things that are above where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God: mind the things that are above not the things that are upon the earth." Why? Because the fashion of this world speedily passeth away: and nothing lasts under the sun that can satisfy the heart of man.

There are also in the virginal garland many very beautiful flowers of a yellow and a dark blue colour having the glow of fire: agreeable to the sight, sweet to the odour: soft and yielding to the touch. These belong to the active life: and signify the compassionate affections of the heart for the succour of the weak and sickly; and the sweet discourses from the mouth of the prudent man to console the sad and burdened: lest they faint in their temptations and daily toils. For thus the law of God prescribes and brotherly love demands: that the strong carry the weak, the prudent instruct the ignorant: the mild restrain the passionate, the fervent arouse the lukewarm: the joyous comfort the sad, the grave reprove the dissolute: the discreet restrain the over-eager, the humble repress the proud: the simple keep in the curious, the constant keep back the frivolous; the silent reprove the talkative: that he may rather edify his hearers by his silence than by a flow of words. From these yellow flowers a most sweet odour often breathes; which strengthens weak souls with spiritual remedies: that they may make greater progress in virtue. Hence it is that St. Paul adorned with many flowers of virtue: exhorts his disciples to gather the flowers of charity, saying: "By charity serve one another, for we are members of one another." And again, "Bear ye one another's burdens: and so you shall fulfill the law of Christ." These flowers of brotherly compassion and instruction are found most fully in the field of Our Lord's preaching: to wit, in the sweet sermons of Christ and in the eight beatitudes; in the mystic parables, and the happy revelations of the heavenly kingdom: in various signs on the sick and the possessed: in pity for the needy and poor; in kindness for sinners and the penitent: in meek words to the hard and perverse; in blameless life and humble service and want with His disciples: in weariness of His tender body, and long nights passed in devout prayer: on high mountains and retired places: suitable for meditating on heavenly joys. Behold as many as were His sacred discourses so many beautiful flowers: as many as His mystic parables, so many splendid roses. And when Jesus spoke to the

apostles of the kingdom of God and the angels: then He showed His friends ethereal flowers in heavenly secrets. And when He gave them a new commandment that they should love one another; and washed their feet instructing them by word and example: then He shed among them a fragrance of most excellent odour from the yellow flowers.

O what a stupendous sign Jesus wrought: when He showed Himself to all as an example of true humility. O wonder above all wonders; that the most holy of all the saints and the most high of all lords should become the lowest servant of all His servants: that the sovereign majesty freely lowered itself below simple and poor men, His guests, saying: “I am in the midst of you as he that serveth: for I came not to be ministered unto: but to minister. If I being your Lord and Master have washed your feet: you also ought to wash one another’s feet.” What more, Lord? One ought to pray for another: to teach by example, to injure no man: to wish to do good to all. These flowers of brotherly compassion and pious assistance greatly adorn the crown of virginal purity and the life of religious observance: both in the contemplation of heavenly secrets and in the visiting of a sick neighbour. For then the flowers of virtue shed a sweeter perfume among brethren, and grow more luxuriantly, when the devout contemplator abandons the angelic ranks for a while: and joyfully goes to serve the sick and needy, as if he saw Christ in person. For when the studious reader of the Scriptures, or the diligent writer of books being called closes the volume and puts down the pen from his hand: and at the sound of the bell at once arises and goes to choir: or hastens without delay to the common labour of the community; then in the garden of his heart by the grace of the Holy Ghost fresh flowers begin to arise, to grow and to become glorious with the fruits of obedience: and they shall be reckoned to him unto very great merit and the more beauteous adorning of his crown. But the lover of solitude and the contemplator of devout meditation must be on his guard against frivolities and rumours: lest by long occupation and unnecessary conversations he lose the sweetness of the mystic ointment: and a slight infection of vinegar and gall destroy the taste of honey. For who is so devout in prayer, so studious in holy reading, so strenuous in toil; who so speedily recollects himself within; as easily as he inclines to things exterior? Who so quickly mends what has been broken; as easily as he breaks anything? Who so soon cleans away stains; as easily as he falls into filth? Therefore O virgins of Christ, O

religious servants of God: stand upon guard over your heart and mouth; lest your senses be corrupted by various desires of the world: which bring no profit to them that walk therein with many dangers and distresses. Behold with numberless deceits and snares: the world is full. Therefore according to the word of Christ, it behoveth to watch and pray against temptations and tribulations arising from every side: and not to fail in well doing as long as strength is there and the time for meriting grace abounds. For it is not a matter of losing a shoe lace, to forfeit the grace of God: to neglect the time of penance: to spend the days idly: and to spurn everlasting life for a little pleasure. Think over the boundless goodness of Christ towards the human race, what great good things He did, what great evils He suffered: and what great rewards He has promised to His elect after the conflicts of this life. Have a good trust in the Lord always; and fly to the divine assistance in every need: and in the time of tribulation do not lose heart, nor cease from prayer. You may take a noteworthy example of patience and perseverance from St. Agnes, Christ's virgin and martyr: a child indeed in body, but an ancient in soul: small of stature, great in merits, weak in sex, most strong in faith: stripped of her garments, adorned with virtues: who to overcome the devil and his fellows: fled to Christ with devout and earnest prayers. And when the human rabble did not cease but by the instigation of the devil made ready a great fire; she biding fearless in the midst of the flames, prayed with outstretched hands: praised Christ with heart and mouth; and desired to attain by the palm of martyrdom her Bridegroom: Whom she loved above all with a most sincere love. For the boundless love of Christ was more mighty in one frail maiden: than the fury of the tyrant armed with sword and fire. Therefore did she merit to have this golden crown adorned with three flowering garlands; because she spurned the world, tamed the flesh: overcame the devil, mocked the tyrant: spurned rewards, conquered pains, and dying for Christ by a most blissful end attained the glory of Christ. Now let us all together pray and call on Our Lord Jesus Christ, the lover of chastity, of innocence and of all purity; that He teach us to imitate the angelic life in frail flesh: and with the holy virgins especially to love, venerate and preserve chastity of mind and body. Amen.

A PRAYER

O most sweet Lord Jesus Christ, flower of all virtues, most chaste lover of virgins, most mighty foe of the demons, most unrelenting extirpator of vices, graciously look upon my weakness, and by the intercession of Thy most blessed Mother the Virgin Mary, and of Thy beloved Bride St. Agnes, venerable virgin and martyr, grant me the aid of heavenly strength that I may learn to despise all earthly things, and to love heavenly, to resist vice, and not to yield to temptations, firmly to cleave to virtue, to flee honours, to shun pleasures, to mourn past sins, to avoid the occasions of evil, to refrain from bad habits, to converse with the good and to persevere in good, that by the gift of Thy grace I may merit to possess the crown of eternal life with St. Agnes and all Thy saints for ever in Thy kingdom. Amen.

AN EXAMPLE

A certain brother of our house often suffered from headache: and he was therefore sometimes obliged to leave the choir. But he had a special devotion to the venerable virgin St. Agnes our Patroness: overflowing with the sweetness of much compassion. And so he desired with great eagerness of heart to visit her holy relics at Utrecht: which are preserved there with honour in the Cathedral Church of St. Martin in a silver casket covered with gold. It came to pass therefore that he went with his Prior to visit the aforesaid place of great veneration and arriving at the above mentioned Cathedral which is fitly adorned with many relics of saints: he begged the sacristan that the casket of most blessed Agnes should be shown him which he had long desired to see in the vehemence of his devotion. Then the guardian of the sacred relics replied: "I may not easily open the precious casket of St. Agnes; but I will willingly show you the ancient reliquary of the holy virgin: in which her sacred relics long rested to the praise and honour of God." And hearing this the brother was glad and consoled: awaiting until the venerable casket should be presented to him. And when it was seen and opened; he reverently bowed and kissed the holy case, and placed his head inside it with confidence: hoping that by the merits of St. Agnes relief would be at once given him. This done therefore he rendered most heartfelt thanks to God and the virgin St. Agnes: that with his own open eyes he had merited to see these things. From which time and henceforth he was not only delivered from the former pains in the body: but

also he made progress in soul in great devotion; and closed well the remainder of his life by a sweet and happy death in fervour of spirit.

ANOTHER

When another brother had been reading in the refectory on the eve of St. Agnes; it befell him by accident that as he was afterwards taking his meal alone a fish bone broke in his mouth and so firmly stuck in his palate: that he could neither draw out nor spit out its point. Wherefore becoming very sad, and fearing that loss of voice threatened him from this injury: he awaited patiently for the Vespers of St. Agnes which were to be solemnly sung in choir. And when the cantor had commenced aloud the responsary *Pulcra facie*: and the assembled choir with joyous voice continued the rest devoutly singing and praising to the honour of St. Agnes; the injured brother also began to sing, and suppliantly to invoke St. Agnes his beloved and kind Patroness: that she would succour him in this hour and free him from this misfortune. And, O wondrous clemency of God and how ineffable is His virtue and power: Who forsakes not them that hope in Him from whatsoever trouble they shall call upon Him. For as soon as he sang these words with the choir, *Intercede pro nobis omnibus*: he felt a little tickling in the palate of the throat, and he began to cough a little: and in a moment with the saliva of his mouth he spat out the fish bone without any harm to his throat. Then being made very joyful he gave thanks to God and the virgin St. Agnes: that he had merited to be heard and cured so speedily. And when Vespers were over, he remained silently in the choir, prostrating himself humbly upon her footstool, kissing the wooden pedestal from inmost affection of heart: congratulating himself in secret upon so great a benefit vouchsafed him by the merits of St. Agnes. Then wishing to assure himself more of the actual fact; he looked for the fish bone which had dropped from his mouth: and he found it fallen on the floor. Taking it with him to his cell, he set it near a picture of St. Agnes: as a perpetual reminder of her special love. By whose holy patronage may the merciful Lord deign to defend us from every danger always and everywhere: and to keep us in a good way with all those commended to us in prayer. Amen.

ANOTHER

There was in the city of Zwolle a certain citizen by name Hermann de Oever, a rich and honourable man, compassionate and merciful towards the poor: and a faithful procurator of the sick and the needy in the hospital of the Holy Ghost. He on the occasion of a certain disturbance in the city against him and some other fellow townsmen: fled to our monastery on the Mount of the virgin St. Agnes for shelter. And because of his worth and goodness he was received and treated kindly: with much charity and brotherly goodwill. And after a short time had passed, he learnt to say the Confiteor and to serve the priest at Mass: although he was now an old man and quite ignorant of letters. And this he did with such diligence and devotion: that when others were otherwise occupied he would willingly and cheerfully serve priests at Mass two or three times in one day. And it was especially our venerable Father William Vorniken, at that time Prior of our house, a special lover of St. Agnes: that he often served with great affection, clothed in a surplice behind in the Church during the High Mass, while the choir was singing.

But it happened one day that he lost some money out of the cell where he dwelt: over which he was very much grieved wondering who had done this. For he had not yet resigned his own: but he lived among the brethren within the cloister as a guest and faithful friend. For during the midday meal some one, a stranger and unknown, secretly entered his cell by the open window: robbed as much as he pleased and quickly departed. When dinner was over and Hermann after the thanksgiving entered his cell; looking for his money he did not find it: and very much saddened he said complaining to one of the lay brothers, Brother John de Eme with whom he was familiar: “O good dear brother John, are there thieves here in the house?” Who said: “Certainly not, good Hermann.” Then he made known the theft that had been committed on him saying: “I have lost the money which I had in my cell: and which has now been secretly stolen during dinner.” To whom brother John comforting the distressed man replied: “Do not think, good friend, that any of our brothers or of the servants of this house has done this. But haply some strange visitor who entered the orchard, being tempted has done it: as we have sometimes experienced before when clothing has been secretly stolen.” But hearing these things our venerable Father and Prior William was exceedingly sad: and all the brethren grieved for the loss of the good man from shame for the theft. Then some of our brothers better

known to him comforting and encouraging him to patience, said to him: “O most dear Hermann be patient now in this: for haply Our Lord God does not wish that you trouble your heart any more about this money. You should make then now a virtue of necessity: and offer it to God and St. Agnes for the salvation of your soul. And if afterwards it befall you to get it again; that you do not wish to keep back any of it: but that all should go to the worship of God and the service of St. Agnes.” He did with a good soul and a pious intention what was counselled him: freely vowing everything to God, and the blessed Virgin Mary, and St. Agnes the Patroness of our Church, which had been consecrated a short while before. When this votive offering had been accomplished: after three days there came a good messenger from Zwolle sent by Master John Haerlem then rector of the devout Beguin Sisters saying: “Brethren, be not anxious and troubled for the lost money: with the favour of God you will soon receive it again.” Hearing this Hermann rejoiced: and with him our Prior and the whole community. But who the thief and burglar was, a cleric or a layman: is still unknown. For it is hoped that he repented, and secretly begged Master John to send it all back to the monastery: which also he faithfully did without mentioning any name. But with this money regained two sets of vestments were bought and made to the honour of St. Agnes: and one silver gilt chalice inscribed with the title Hermann de Oever on the foot of the chalice.

ANOTHER

A certain brother of our house celebrating in the Chapter House at the altar of the virgin St Agnes, by the snare of the devil was on a sudden tempted during Mass concerning the faith and the sacrament of the body of Christ: wherein very often he had great consolation and devotion. Feeling therefore that a grave question was arising: he turned himself speedily to the merciful Lord Jesus Christ with groaning and a right intention of faith praying. And at once he heard within a divine answer addressed to him. “Believe thou as St. Agnes, Caecilia, Barbara, and other holy virgins believed: who suffered for Christ and doubted of no doctrine of faith.” When he heard this: the temptation ceased and the questioning doubt. And very often afterwards he turned over these words against any suggestion of the devil: “Believe as

Agnes, Caecilia, and Barbara: and thou shalt never err in the Catholic Faith. For there are as many true witnesses: as there are holy words in the Bible.”

ANOTHER

Another also of our brothers communicated out of devotion at the same place and altar: he was infirm and had long been accustomed to walk bowed down, supporting himself on crutches. But after the celebration of the Mass by the power of Christ, and the merits of St. Agnes, he became so strong: that he left his crutches there after the Mass: and then passed to the choir and the community rejoicing and upright. And a certain brother being astonished at this event: piously began to question: what the sick man had done and thought during the Mass. And the man who was healed replied: “I thought and turned over the words of the holy Gospel: which Luke narrates of Our Lord Jesus Christ: ‘And the whole multitude sought to touch Him: and virtue went out from Him, and healed all.’ ” A good faith then and the power of the sacraments with the prayers of the saints can still heal the weak in mind and body; that they may become fervent in the love of God, and more ready for every good work: and obedient to their prelates without delay. These be the miracles of eternal salvation: which Christ in His great clemency still often works with the devout.

ANOTHER

It happened likewise once in Lent that a certain brother was asked to celebrate Mass about the fifth hour in the morning for the guests and the whole family of our household; as was usual for the good custody of those who laboured in the offices: and for those setting out on a journey near or far. And that brother piously agreed: and from charity willingly did as he was requested. It was then the feast of St. Gregory, Pope, whom the brother loved with a special devotion: because on his feast he first entered the school to learn the alphabet with other children. When therefore he had arrived at the altar he began to think what Mass he should say: of the fast or of St. Gregory. It immediately entered his mind, “Thou hast not yet said the Mass of St. Agnes this week: for the special cause commended to thee. Read now therefore the Mass of St. Agnes with the collect of St. Gregory: and afterwards thou shalt sing his Mass in the choir with the whole

community with a gladsome heart.” He did so therefore with a good confidence: fulfilling his vow to St. Agnes our Patroness most highly beloved of Christ. While then nearly all were gathered in the Church and were hearing Mass: there befell the danger of a great fire in our farm house, unknown to any one. But the loving and merciful Lord saw to it very well: that the fire was speedily quenched. For a certain lay oblate of ours by name Matthias, going out of the Church after the elevation, came upon the spot: and put out the commencement of the fire. The which we are confident should be ascribed to the merits of St. Agnes: of whom in particular at that time a Mass was being read, to beseech the Lord for a pious cause. For God Who preserved blessed Agnes unharmed praying in the midst of the flames with outstretched hands: He on that day in loving goodness saved our house with all its utensils unburnt by her prayers and merits. For one of the laics entered the Church with the others to hear Mass; and he had neglected to put out a lantern under the roof of the house: which, having burnt its cord, fell upon the straw lying there and set it on fire. But the compassionate Lord seeing all and heeding in mercy the prayers of the poor: vouchsafed that this danger should be met by another in good time as was said above. And our devout and dearly loved Father, Brother Theodoric Clive, the third venerable Prior of our house, hearing that the danger of fire had befallen, and by the favour of God had immediately ceased: at first was seized with terror: and no wonder. Then he was comforted and gave thanks to God that so grave a peril had not spread: but had been at once removed. When then the news of the fire reached the ears of the others: the brother who on the same day celebrated the Mass of St. Agnes, went privately to his Father Prior: and humbly told him: “Dear Father let us give thanks to God and St. Agnes our Patroness: because her Mass was read to-day for a special cause: and I am sure that she prayed for us, and the Lord delivered us from that fire.” Then the good father and pious shepherd rejoicing greatly, as a chaste lover of St. Agnes, enjoined special prayers upon the brethren; and ordered that greater alms should be distributed to the poor: for so marked a protection from the fire at the time, and from all evil to come. Amen.

ANOTHER

A certain man stole a horse from the pasturage of our monastery of Mt. St. Agnes; which he took with him beyond a mile from our monastery: thinking that he was safe and that he would return prosperously to his home with his spoils. Coming therefore to a certain town he bound the horse with a cord to a post in the hedge at a cross road: and entering an inn sat there to drink and rest a little. Meanwhile, however, the horse standing outside alone, and seeing nobody there, becoming somewhat restless, because he was in a strange district, and violently taken away from the place of his dwelling: began to move his head constantly hither and thither, and to kick with his heels. And he tugged so long this way and that at the rein with which he had been bound: that at last he broke the knot of the fastening. And when he found himself free and untied, and waiting a long time did not see his rider: and because it is natural to an animal tied up to love liberty and to return to his accustomed stable: he at once turned his head to the straight road by which he had come: and running swiftly alone by the leading of God arrived safe at the monastery gate. And standing quietly there and awaiting in the place known to him: he was easily recognized by our porter and farm labourer, and gladly brought in: for which may God be blessed for ever.

O most blessed Agnes ever worthy of honour, we attribute this to thy merits: because in many of our needs we have experienced thy patronage. Therefore we proclaim and devoutly invoke and praise Christ in thee: giving thanks to God always for all His blessings mercifully bestowed upon us. Amen.

SERMON XXVIII

ON THE DEDICATION OF THE CHURCH: OF THE FIVE LAMPS OF THE TEMPLE

MY house shall be called the house of prayer, saith the Lord. Beloved brethren, to-day is the solemn festival of the dedication of our Church; which ought to be devoutly and joyously celebrated by all dwelling in this place: and which ought to uplift the minds of those who keep it to the heavenly bliss of the angels. For unto this is every Church built and dedicated: that therein the worship of divine praise be performed: and the prayers of the faithful merit to be more speedily and fully heard by God in the holy place. Now the Church of God is much adorned and illuminated: if these following five acts of worship be exercised therein: and as heavenly lamps be carefully kept that they may give light in the temple of God.

The first that shines forth among other acts of divine worship and lights up the house of prayer: and excites those that enter the Church to pray, and enkindles the hearts of the faithful in divine love; is when priests clothed with the sacred vestments, reverently go up to the altar, devoutly celebrate Masses: and for themselves and for the common people offer the sacrifice supremely pleasing to God, and piously intercede.

The second that chiefly adorns the house of God and gives splendour to the choirs of clerics: is when the canonical Hours instituted by the Church are daily duly rendered in their seasons by clerics and religious: and all things that are to be recited and sung are reverently and becomingly performed and accomplished to the honour of God: and all levity, noise and disorder are as far as possible strictly avoided.

The third which brings exceeding beauty and light to the house of God: is when the word of God is frequently preached with fervour by priests, pastors and doctors to the Christian people, to kings and princes, to old and young, to small and great, and they are terrified as by a heavenly trumpet with punishments not to sin: and are comforted with eternal rewards not to despair. For holy priests and preachers shall have great rewards, who instruct many by their life and teaching: and by frequent admonition draw and lead them to virtue. Whence of our holy Father Augustine the glorious doctor of holy Church we read and sing: that he preached the word of God in the holy Church unceasingly, readily and mightily, with sound mind and clear intelligence even to his last illness. Who by the help of God lived long in virtue for the salvation of many writing books and teaching the ignorant: and he magnificently enriched, adorned and enlightened holy Church by the multitude of his books. Whom for the excellence of his merits it is right to praise: and with filial affection ever to honour and suppliantly to beseech; that we may be able to follow him on the right path to Christ reigning in Heaven: Whom he so burningly loved and praised in hymns and psalms while he was on earth.

Fourthly the house of God is much beautified and brightened by frequent visiting of the Church to hear the word of God: and to keep the law of life and discipline which leads to the country of eternal radiance and peace. For those who desire happily to attain after death the joys of the heavenly kingdom: should now while they are in health and life, frequently visit the house of God, and willingly hear sermons: often make confession, seek and pray for indulgences. Time is short: and the hour of health uncertain. He therefore who now does not repent and amend; after the door is shut shall stand without and shall not obtain mercy: he shall cry mourning, nor shall he be heard when he weeps. Happy the people and very praiseworthy: which leaving vain sights, hastens betimes to the house of prayer and to the preaching of the divine word: giving thanks to God for blessings received: and praying for more to come. A beautiful sight: to see the temple of God on all sides full of the faithful: and the market at rest from the business of the world.

Fifthly the Church of God is decked and illumined by the frequent and common prayer of many, both of the clergy and of the whole Christian people, urgently beseeching God: for the divers intentions and needs of all

in want, sound and sick, living and dead. These five lamps are very necessary and useful in every Church; they excellently adorn the house of prayer: and as five burning lights illuminate the temple of God: and show the right way to the Jerusalem above and the heavenly dwelling. Wherever therefore in the Church these devout and holy offices are reverently and diligently performed in their due time: there God dwells, there He presides, teaches and rules: as blessed John says in the Apocalypse: "Behold the tabernacle of God with men: and He will dwell with them." Having therefore shut out all noise and gossip with jesting: it is befitting and right to do naught else in the house of prayer and the holy place; save what most pleases God and edifies the neighbours: and belongs especially to the divine worship. What things then that aid the grace of devotion, and the sweetness of the canticles and the understanding of the words: these should be weighed in the heart, and with rejoicing mouth uttered to the praise of God. All vicious and idle discourses are everywhere to be shunned: but nevertheless especially in the temple of God, in the court of the sovereign King, in the sanctuary of the Holy Ghost, in the sight of the angels and the heavenly citizens, in the presence of the spirits above. Highly venerable therefore is this place foreseen from eternity by God, and chosen and set aside to serve Him with His ministers and sacred vessels: and in the time preordained, by the hands of the Bishop consecrated and adorned with many holy relics. In which place indeed human things are united with divine, the lowest with the highest, earthly with heavenly: through the sacraments of Christ which are there handled and celebrated by the priests in Masses. What the holy angels do in Heaven, this also the faithful ought to do on earth: to wit, praise and bless God with all their strength: and magnify Him above all saints and creatures, for His gifts and blessings. And if not with such dignity and cheerfulness as the angels: nevertheless everyone should strive to do according to the power of his weakness and fit himself, that he may always praise God perfectly with the angels: love Him above all, and in all things bless. If thou canst not make music with the lips of thy mouth: thou shouldst cry to God with the sighs of the heart. If thou art hoarse or unmelodious, cease not from praise: nor withdraw from the divine worship; but listen to what is sung and recited by others: and rejoice with them that sing well. If thou canst not sing so beautifully as the larks and nightingales: sing and praise mournfully like the crows and the frogs in

the marsh: who sing as God has given and nature has allowed. Be not puffed up, jackdaw, for the loudness of thy voice: for thou knowest not how long thou shalt last and sing high. The voice indeed of a humble and contrite heart: sounds well in the ears of God almighty, Who hears all things. Sing and praise God in the voice of exultation, mindful nevertheless of thy own vileness with fear of trouble to come. Sing humbly with holy David in the psalm: "Let my heart rejoice that it may fear Thy name." Who so faithful in all things as David going forth at the bidding of the king; who was a soldier by day fighting valiantly, a monk by night rising cheerfully and praying devoutly? If thou canst not with St. John the evangelist contemplate things lofty and divine: fall down with Mary Magdalene at the feet of Jesus humbly imploring pardon and weeping for thy sins: that thou mayest receive remission of the many sins, whereby thou hast often offended God. If thou canst not with St. Paul fly to the third Heaven: thou shouldst remain with him by Jesus crucified, not glorying in the flesh: but crucifying the flesh with its vices and concupiscences. If thou hast not the wings of an eagle which flies to the stars of Heaven; have the wings of the simple dove which builds her nest in the rock: daily meditating the most holy wounds of Jesus. For humble Francis found more holiness and sweetness in the Passion of Christ: than a subtle astronomer in gazing upon the stars of Heaven. Forsaking therefore things vain and useless, study in the Life and Passion of Christ: and it will profit thee more than all the arts of the world. If thou wishest to be comforted from Heaven: flee men and the news of the world. Be willingly alone with the Lord: and seek solace within in devout prayers and holy meditations. Nothing is more wholesome, nothing sweeter, nothing more pleasant; than to praise God in hymns and psalms: and to have the heart aloft with the angels in Heaven, leaving aside all things below. Such a one may say in rapture of spirit: "I was mindful of God alone in the joy of my heart." Truly the Lord is in this place: this is naught else but the house of God and the gate of Heaven. Open to me the gates, ye holy angels: and I will sing with you the name of the Lord my God for ever and ever. But woe to him, who knowingly thinks of vain things amid divine: and with a perverse mind turns over things offensive. Woe to him who fancies unclean idols: and neglects the precious wounds of Christ: and fears not to suffer the torments of hell. Woe to him who there is silent and sleeps: where he ought to watch and pray. Woe to the idle and dissolute,

and to the late comers; who look round the walls with roving eyes: and heed not the sweet psalms. Woe to them that often think of food and drink: and consider little and rarely mourn for the pains of the souls in Purgatory. If any one was there for an hour he would never feel weariness in choir: nor sadness in fasting: nor fatigue in toil. Blessed all religious and devout servants of God, cheerful in divine worship, studious in reading and writing books: who restrain themselves and others from light words: and faithfully pray for their benefactors and all the troubled and tempted: whose number is very great: better known to God than to men. Whoever then is thankful and faithful in small and present gifts: he shall be worthy to receive greater from God in Heaven. To do aught negligently in the Divine Office: will not go unpunished. Take care and fear lest the alms cry out against you that they have been ill spent: and the Hours often heedlessly recited and accomplished. From which evils may Jesus Christ deliver us; forgive us all our trespasses: and after the perils of this life happily lead us to the heavenly kingdoms. Amen.

SERMON XXIX

OF THE ORNAMENTS AND VIRTUES OF THE MINISTERS IN THE TEMPLE OF GOD

THEY adorned the front of the temple with crowns of gold; and they dedicated the altar to the Lord: and there was great joy among the people. Beloved brethren, these things are read in the first Book of the Macchabees, concerning the renewed temple of God: and they are also sung by us in the Church at the accustomed time. As therefore those saints of old were joyous and devout in the material temple, praising God in hymns and organs, for the victory given them from Heaven over their foes: so we also ought to be much more devout giving thanks to Christ Who has delivered us from the tumult of the world and the snares of the devil; and has given us hope of attaining the festivity of the heavenly Jerusalem: and the dedication of the immaterial temple where God dwells with all His saints. You should seek in the letter the spiritual sense, and in the wax the hidden honey; and let your soul rejoice in the living God, and in every word which proceedeth from the mouth of God: as the angels and all the saints in Heaven. For then shall your soul be able to ascend by the ladder of the holy words to the heights of Heaven: when it heeds not outward beauty; and from its inmost heart is mindful of the Lord its God alone: as far as it is given it to taste of the grace of supernal visitation in the state of human weakness.

Brothers, there is great rejoicing in the dedication of the Church there: where there is the purity of an innocent life, the freedom of a good conscience, the gladness of spiritual joy; the preaching of a holy doctrine, the observance of the regular discipline: remembrance of the heavenly

kingdom, forgetfulness of all worldly joy. There is true beauty of the temple, and adorning of the Church with boughs and sweet smelling flowers there; where there is true contrition of heart, humble confession of mouth: and worthy satisfaction for sins committed. There is the joyous dedication of a new altar there: where there is fresh fervour of devotion with giving of thanks in rejoicing of heart for blessings received.

No one should appear empty in the sight of the Lord: but each should always have something to offer at the altar to the honour of God. He offers a calf and a goat: who crushes the wantonness of the flesh by fasting. He slays a bull and an ox: who brings down the pride of mind and the obstinacy of his own opinion to nothing by humility and the counsel of the wise. He offers a spotless lamb worthy of God; who daily devoutly commemorates the Passion of Christ: and conforms himself to Him by patience and mildness. He sacrifices a ram; who ascribes all his virtue and strength to God: and attributes nothing of good to himself. He burns the loins, the heart and the breast upon the altar: who curbs all carnal affections by the fervour of a holy spirit. He offers a dove: who walks in simplicity, and holds his peace concerning the affairs of others; who mourns with the sorrowing: and prays for them that contradict him. He offers a turtle dove to God: who loves chastity and seeks solitude; and when he loses earthly solace: flies the more freely to the heavenly palace. He sacrifices a sparrow: who abstains from the chattering of useless words; and dwells alone in the secret of his cell that he may have greater peace: and be burdensome to none by speech. And he adorns the front of the temple with crowns of gold; who willingly reads, writes and preaches the noble deeds of the saints: and to the encouragement of virtue proclaims their rewards to others, that they fail not in temptations. He hangs up golden shields in the Church for adornment; who relates to his neighbours with what great virtues the fathers of the Old and New Testament are resplendent unto their edification; who recites the conflicts of the martyrs unto the bearing of adversity: commemorates the toils of confessors unto abstinence: beatifies the trophies of virgins and the continence of widows unto the chastising of the body: worthily praises the books of the doctors and the sermons of preachers unto studying, reading, writing: and unfolds and explains the good works of others unto the praise of God and the honour of Holy Church. He paints and adorns beautiful pictures: who edifies his neighbour by his life and conduct. Behold so many

golden escutcheons shine in the church; as there are names of saints, as festivals, as holy words: as we see good examples.

O what a great festival is celebrated in the Church triumphant; where having overcome all enemies all the saints rejoice together with the holy angels clothed in white robes: and crowned with golden crowns that shall never perish. There indeed there is eternal praise and glory: that shall abide without ceasing. There the voice is sweet without harshness; the singing high without fatigue: peace boundless without fear; joy without grief, love without envy, knowledge without error. There there is abundance without want, dignity without contempt: health without death; bliss without weeping, security without fear: pleasure without vice, fullness without weariness; brightness without shadow, truth without ambiguity: purity without stain, freedom without hindrance; conscience without scruple, supreme happiness without end: all good things in God. O how festively rejoice there the souls of the saints loosed from the bond of the body, cleansed from all stain of sin: intimately united with God, one with Him without a medium, flying freely through the space of Heaven: singing and giving thanks to God most joyfully. "The snare is broken: and we are delivered."

As often therefore as there is any feast of the saints in the Church; we ought to remember what and how great it is in Heaven: and despise everything that gives pleasure in this life. Happy the religious who apart from all worldly crowds: free from temporal cares, and at rest from the passions: direct the eye of the mind to heavenly things: and for the sweetness of the interior love which they feel, desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ. Happy those who are called to the heavenly dedication and to the supper of the Lamb: and so strive to prepare themselves, that they may be worthy to enter with the elect. A true saying: "No man can rejoice here with the world: and afterwards reign with Christ." Pleasant meadows lead the unwise to evil shelters. And those who now always seek delights and honours: after brief joy shall find eternal fire and grief. Alas miserable and foolish lovers of the world; who turn the feasts of Christ and the honours of the saints into banquets of feasting and games; where shall ye abide? Woe to you who abandon Jesus, and seek the world: neglect the saints, and associate to yourselves the dissipated and dissolute; displease the angels, and rejoice the demons. Woe to you who mock the simple and

praise the deceitful; tread under foot the roses of virtue, and gather the thorns of sin; gaze upon present goods and foresee not nor fear the evils to come. Why, fools, do ye deceive yourselves; and return not to the right way? Fear God lest at any time the Lord be angry, and you perish speedily from the earth with the wicked: and receive hell for the pleasures which you loved. For the labourer is worthy of his hire: whether he has done well or ill in this life.

Our happy and holy mother the Church has also for her great comfort and for the beauty of the house of God in good custody many bodies of saints: worthy of all honour. At the sight of which many faithful are often excited to the love of God and tears; earnestly beseeching their daily intercession: that by their holy merits they may merit to attain everlasting joys. For what church is there or chapel so poor and small; that has not or does not succeed in obtaining some holy relics for the adornment of its sanctuary: and for devotion to the souls of the saints reigning with Christ in glory? For humbly to venerate the sacred bones of the saints, is to honour Christ: since in them the Holy Ghost dwelt; by them the world was overcome: and the devil put to shame through the faith of Christ. We must trust therefore without hesitation that they will willingly pray for us their friends dwelling upon earth; whom they see fervent in prayer, and often raising the eyes with groaning to Heaven: and forsaking all things from the heart for Christ's sake. It also aids weak souls not a little to gladness of heart: if on feasts priests and ministers are clad in better vestments and copes to celebrate the divine worship with more solemnity; if the altars and holy places are adorned with flowers and foliage: so that by outward signs the hearts of the slow may be enkindled the more speedily to meditate upon heavenly things. However in these ceremonies, services and ornaments naught should be done vainly for human praise and one's own complacency; lest God, Who regards the hearts of the humble, be offended by useless clamour and dissolute conduct: lest the temporal feast be changed into a sin for the soul from some levity or curiosity. For praise is not seemly in the mouth of a proud man; nor does God take pleasure in sonorous lips, tainted with vain-glory: or opened with discordant voice. Let then every devout suppliant give thanks to God: let every ardent lover sing praises to the Lord; let all the souls of the saints with the angels in Heaven chant and praise God: let all the churches of earth with the faithful in this world chant and praise God

saying: “Praise and honour beseem Thee, O Lord: for Thy exceeding great majesty for ever and ever. Amen.”

SERMON XXX

OF THE FOUR CONDITIONS BELONGING TO THE BUILDING AND BEAUTY OF THE HOUSE OF GOD

HOLINESS becometh Thy house, O Lord: unto length of days. Beloved brethren, be ye circumspect and guarded in every time and place; but especially in the Church, in the choir and at the Divine Office: where you may be remarked by many. You are the temple of God, you are the house of God: God has chosen you unto His inheritance, to whom He has promised to give the kingdom of God. Note therefore the four conditions that belong to the beauty of the house of God: and lead to the holiness of true religion. Every good house ought to have a strong foundation: straight walls; bright windows: and a whole roof.

First the house of our soul ought to have the foundation of a deep humility: lest the whole building fall from the height of pride into the abyss of eternal damnation. Therefore have many fallen away from the religious state into divers temptations of the devil and sins of the flesh: because they had not nor took their stand upon the strong foundation of true humility: which guards a man from numberless snares of the devil and falls. Happy the soul that desires not temporal honour; but shuns all ease as much as it can: and deems contempt the greatest gain. Said a certain devout man: “They who praise me oft deceive me; and they who blame me: often do me good.” Whence holy David prays: “Let not the foot of pride come to me.” Why? “For there the workers of iniquity are fallen: they are cast out, and could not stand.” And why could they not stand? Because they were proud: and gave not thanks to God. “For God resisteth the proud: but to the humble

He giveth grace.” For no man is safely and rightly praised, but the truly humble: to whom the world is as faded and all its glory. He then who will stand well and firmly, let him hold to the foundation of humility: let him depart not from humility: however much he may be praised, or honoured. Take care brethren that ye lose not the whole reward of your labour through pride and the empty praise of men: that ye fall not with the devil into damnation and everlasting fire. For speedily as smoke passes away all pleasure of the flesh, all temporal honour and glory; but the pain of hell shall not pass away speedily: nay that sulphurous fire prepared for the wicked shall last for ever.

Secondly the house of our soul ought to have four walls straight and strong, standing upright and welded; not of crooked beams and broken joists, but of precious stones skilfully squared and well polished. These are the four holy gospels written with truth concerning the incarnation of Christ: wholesomely designed for the whole world unto a right belief and a just and pious living. These walls are as most strong outworks: and as the towers of Jerusalem with their ramparts; which cannot fall or perish for ever: because the truth of the Lord is from ever and shall abide even unto eternity. However much then the world may rage against the humble and devout faithful; or the devil tempt, or the tyrant persecute or the greedy despoil: the just man nevertheless trusting in the Lord shall not be disturbed. And if the malignant curse, the pagan scoff, the Jew mock, the cunning argue, the philosopher reject: the incredulous doubt, the heretic err, the blasphemous snarl, the possessed clamour: the furious terrify with swords, the mad tear with the teeth: nevertheless against lying men the truth-telling Christ shall ever prevail: and with Him shall be victorious the faithful Christian who is strengthened by His words of truth. “Fear not,” he saith, “little flock. For I will give you a mouth and wisdom: which all your adversaries will not be able to resist and gainsay. For it is easier for Heaven and earth to pass: than one tittle of the law to fall.” He therefore who follows Christ, and believes rightly and lives well, as the gospels teach and the holy doctors fully expound: he has four walls straight and strong welded by divine charity: which firmly fortify the temple of his soul: and drive away all doubts from his mind. For thus are the words of the holy gospel divinely inspired in the faithful man and the devout soul: as a golden shield against the fiery temptations of the devil and the flatteries of the flesh; as

the precious stones on the breast of Aaron the priest against the errors of the world: as white pearls on the crown of a virgin against wicked thoughts; as burning lamps in the midst of the Church most brightly gleaming before the Lord of Heaven and earth: and as columns of bronze adorned with silver sustaining the whole building of the temple.

Happy the soul to which is pleasant and sweet every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God: and whatever she hears or reads in the gospel of Christ. For the more often a man hears and reads the words of the gospel: and the more heedfully he considers and muses upon them: the more progress shall he make in virtue: and the more firmly shall the house of his soul stand and the more brightly shall it be resplendent. Much also shall he rejoice in the end who loves Jesus intimately: and he shall receive a special grace from Him because of his mindfulness of Him. For He Himself saith to His beloved disciples: exiled in the world: "Abide in My love. He that abideth in Me and I in him: the same beareth much fruit." If you wish to bear much fruit and to increase the merit of your labours: then go by the narrow way forsaking your own will for the sake of obedience: which leads by a straight path to eternal life. If you would also know the sum total of all books, then strive to follow Christ by the cross and contempt of all worldly things; and you shall find rest for your souls: and the kingdom of Heaven shall be opened to you.

Clear then the field of your heart from the briars and thorns of vices: and you shall receive the grace of Christ and the friendship of all the holy angels. For assuredly while you labour in the vineyard of the Lord many kinds of virtue shall spring up in your soul: to wit, for the burdock of pride, the spikenard of humility: for the nettle of lust, the lily of chastity: for the wormwood of anger, the fig of mildness; for the thorn of envy, the rose of charity: for the briar of gloom, the mugwort of spiritual joy; for the cockle of discord, the balsam of sweet agreement: for the juniper of injury, the olive of brotherly compassion: for the berry of dissipation: the myrrh of devout meditation.

Thirdly, the house of our soul ought to have seven bright windows always open to receive the light of Heaven from God: but shut against the thunders and thunderbolts of the devil. These windows are the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost; which illumine the soul by the knowledge of truth: and enkindle it within by the heat of charity. When these gifts are received and

kindled the darkness of sin is dispelled, and the pleasures of the outward senses; which blind the eyes of those who look upon worldly vanities: who alas neglect the glory of the blessed in the kingdom of Heaven. Great care then must be taken that the windows of our soul be not darkened by the smoke of anger, or the cloud of gloom: or the dust of vainglory, or by an immodest fancy: or by long conversation. Especially must we watch that our windows, lit up by the spirit of wisdom and understanding in the scriptures, be not broken by hard words; or befouled by the mud of evil suspicion: or too much enfolded in temporal cares; and so turned away from the brightness of the heavenly light: and often deprived of heavenly consolation. Very carefully then must the windows of our house be guarded in every place and time because of the weakness of human life: which easily declines from the fervour of devotion to earthly occupations for recreation or under pretext of the profit of others. But the angel of Satan often beguiles him who takes leisure in God: under pretext of external recreation. And therefore we should insist the more on devout prayers: and protect the windows of our house the more strongly by holy meditations; lest the devil have an entry by the wandering of our mind: and this especially in time of prayer and study of spiritual reading. For Satan comes secretly by the door of the sight or hearing with external imaginations seeking to snatch the psalm or word from the mouth of him who recites: or urging to leave the choir from weariness of mind. Wherefore a great effort must be made and we must return betimes to interior things; that when Christ comes and knocks at the door it may be at once opened to Him: and the light of His grace sweetly flow in: and light up, cleanse and sanctify the whole house of the mind: and the more carefully guard and defend it from all intruding vices.

O most gentle Lord Jesus Christ, my mercy and my refuge in my every tribulation and distress: O would Thou wouldst deign sometime to enter the house of my soul with heavenly light in the company of the angels: and with a golden thurible full of spices incense all my interior, and consecrate my heart as a temple of the Holy Ghost: sign it with the holy cross, anoint it with the oil of grace: place there the golden urn with manna, and firmly fix the book of Thy law to my side: that therein I may study Thy heavenly and divine commandments day and night: as long as I dwell an exile on this earth. The house of our soul should also have four strong beams: lest the

walls be shaken by the wind of pride: or lest a man being struck by the arrow of malediction depart from the truth of the gospel and the holiness of a humble life. For all things without humility and a constant watchfulness: lie open to danger and ruin. Let the faithful soul then hold on to the beam of justice, doing injury to no man: let her hold on to the beam of fortitude, piously enduring the malice of others; let her hold on to the beam of temperance, curbing the wantonness of the flesh: let her hold on to the beam of prudence, being on her guard against the deceit of error. Also be not negligent: for negligence is the loss of much good work and time. Who shall easily regain time lost? One hour of silence spent with God rejoices the conscience more: than three hours spent in vain gossip. Be therefore, most beloved, diligent in labour: guarded in mouth: simple in evil: prudent in good: devout to God, kind to the neighbour: strangers to the world, near to Heaven.

Fourthly the house of our soul ought to have a roof solid and whole against the rain and wind; lest the work well begun perish before the end be completed: and he incur scandal who from heedlessness omitted to roof the house which was well founded. The Spouse says in the Canticles: "The beams of our houses are of cedar: our rafters of cypress trees." The rafters are made of two beams: which are joined at the top of the house and divided below: but fixed to the walls by nails. Let the soul therefore have constancy at the beginning of her conversion to make progress in virtue; let her also hold on to perseverance in good work unto the going forth of life from the prison of the body: that she may gain for the brief toil of the combat the reward of everlasting blessedness. With these two beams of constancy and perseverance is formed and completed the roof of the faithful soul: which is made unto the image of the holy Trinity. Many begin fervently, but gradually grow lukewarm; they turn to exterior things: and neglect to finish what they have begun. The house of these has not a sound roof; therefore evil thoughts often enter which stain the conscience: and destroy the grace of devotion. At length when the wind of temptation fiercely blows, either they fall away from their good purpose: or they think of departing from their place, by the instigation of the devil. These then unless they bow to the counsel of their prelates: cannot long persevere with the good. Do not, frail man, depart from the religious state and from the holy congregation; but endure a little while: for the hope of eternal reward in heavenly joys. Stand

firm in thy good purpose, listen humbly to advice; strive every day manfully, toil diligently: pray frequently, bear patiently, forgive willingly: wait with longanimity, hope trustfully, persevere constantly: and thou shalt be crowned by God with a crown of glory undoubtedly. “For he that shall persevere unto the end: he shall be saved.” It is useful also to roof our house with tiles; lest the wind of pride blow: or the rain of carnal delight stain the conscience. The tiles are the examples and words of Christ: which teach us to resist the devil; and to take up good meditations against evil suggestions: and day and night to watch in prayer.

Happy the soul which merits to bring her life to a good end of perseverance; so that after many toils of body and sorrows of heart it may be able to say in the end what Christ said on the cross: “It is consummated.” These few words said to the praise of God concerning the house and temple of the soul: many thanks should be rendered to God even for the least good word or thought inspired from above. Every holy place then should be held ever in reverence by us: on account of the many blessings which there are wont to be bestowed upon devout suppliants. For there the sinner penitent and praying obtains pardon: the just man giving thanks merits grace. There the poor man moaning and beseeching obtains alms: the rich man compassionating and giving merits the mercy of God. There the priest celebrating offers to God a sacrifice more worthy than all other sacrifice; praying and bending the knee for himself and many others: there he who hears Mass is often touched even to tears sorrowing within. There the devout suppliant during Mass thinks on the sacred Passion of Christ: there the pilgrim wayfarer about to journey by land and sea receives a blessing: and a guide for a good way Jesus Christ the faithful friend. There the minister of the priest supplies the place of the angels, by a service most pleasing to God: there the communicant receives the most holy body of the Lord the food of angels the most noble of all gifts. There he who is going to toil for the day receives strength from God; the sorrowful receive consolation, the fearful courage: the compunct devotion. There the tempted find a remedy; the troubled counsel: the weak help. There the sound receive joy, the sick medicine: the dying a defence against the enemy on the way: the dead deliverance from pains, by the celebration of Masses. It is good therefore to enter the house of God, to visit the church: to hear Mass, to go round the cemetery, to pray for the dead: to worship the holy places and

altars: to keep relics, to honour the images of the saints: above all the holy men and women to suppliantly adore the sacrament of Christ; not to discuss lofty things: to be unwilling to dive into difficult questions; humbly to respect mysteries: to commit deep matters to God. For the truth deceives no man: Almighty God can do all things. He who would stand well and please God: should grieve much over all his past offences: even for good neglected and sins confessed. It is the salvation of the soul often to moan, often to pray: often to confess, often to communicate. It is a sign of devotion often to make good resolutions, often to think good thoughts: often to write, read, muse on hymns and psalms: never to idle, to shun frivolities: to work things profitable: to love God with the heart and devoutly praise with the mouth.

Brethren, now is the time of grace: now we ought to seek, ask and knock: and fit ourselves by every effort to receive the grace of God. Now are we able every day and in every place to merit the eternal kingdom, and escape eternal pains: if by the grace of God we do true penance. The door of Heaven is not yet closed: the gate is open: those may enter who are ready. Those who are not ready let them strive to prepare themselves, and amend their life more perfectly: that when Christ comes and calls they may be worthy to enter joyfully with the just. O faithful and humble soul consider how great is the mercy of God over thee in all thy life: that He does not immediately avenge Himself: but waits long and lovingly recalls to Himself. O happy Mother Church truly with thee there is a hidden God: infinite treasure, plentiful redemption: and eternal salvation. The human eye does not see and cannot see: nor any understanding grasp, nor frail reason penetrate; how God is truly entire in this sacrament: is eaten, and yet always remains whole. O what great wonders God works in the sacrament: to Whom naught is impossible to do whatever He will in Heaven and on earth: for the glory and everlasting memorial of His holy name. O saving Victim which openest the gate of Heaven: what wonderful things are said of thee, how unspeakable are all that lie hid in thee: how piously and truly they are believed of thee, and invisibly wrought through thee. These things are proposed to us to be faithfully believed, reverently celebrated: lovingly received, sweetly tasted: incessantly worshipped, ardently embraced: and daily for the salvation of all most pleasingly offered to God the Father. For as often as Mass is celebrated, and the Host consecrated by the word of God: so often does our God come to men: for men come down from

Heaven: with men desire to remain, whom He created and redeemed: and intends to make happy for ever as He promised saying: “Behold I am with you all days: even to the consummation of the world.” O comforting word, O pious and faithful testament: O great and indubitable and divine promise: to have God ever with him present in the sacrament: Whom the angels have and worship reigning in Heaven.

When therefore the sacred Host at the altar is raised by the hands of the priest and showed to men to be adored: then Christ Who suffered and was crucified for us is presented under a mystic veil: is truly worshipped, devoutly invoked, meekly honoured. Whoever therefore wishes to enter the temple of God, and pray: or recite, or sing, or hear Mass, or celebrate: should first prepare himself, and with a pious intention so dispose himself and consider: as if he were about to go to the Pope and Emperor, to make some petition for himself and his friends in some case of necessity. For it aids him who prays and chants in every place and time: to think of God as present and with the holy angels looking upon him attentively with all-seeing eyes. And as a man prepares himself before prayer: so frequently he finds himself afterwards in prayer. The wanderer prays wanderingly: the frivolous man sings frivolously. Heed, frail man, the reverence due to God: and with holy David go over into the place of the wonderful tabernacle in holy fear: presume not of thyself, but with the publican seek mercy and pardon in the present exile; that hereafter with Lazarus thou mayest merit to have eternal rest and glory in Heaven. Which may Jesus Christ deign to grant us all, the Son of God born of the Virgin Mary: crucified and sacrificed for us: Who with the Father and the Holy Ghost liveth and reigneth God: for ever and ever. Amen.

Here end the Sermons to the Novices.

Here follow certain examples, for the sake of edification.

AN EXAMPLE

A certain religious brother of our house intending to celebrate Mass: first out of charity visited another brother who was seriously ill. The sick man therefore asked him faithfully to pray to the Lord for him in the Mass: and if it pleased the Lord that he might become well again. Then the priest moved with pity, very affectionately and earnestly desiring to fulfil the

work of charity: prayed the loving Lord for the health of the brother. And when Mass was over, he at once went to the sick man again: and asked how it was with him. The sick man answered: “Thanks be to God, I feel myself much better by virtue of the Mass, which out of charity you have said for me to-day.” After a few days that sick brother regained his health: and making much progress in devotion in holy religion and cheerfully reading devout books and the discourses of the saints: by the ordinance of God he was finally after a few years elected to the priorship.

ANOTHER

A certain ancient brother in our convent was once tormented with excessive pains in the stomach: so that he could neither sit nor sleep quietly for the suffering which he endured within. And when for a whole night and almost to midday he had been so afflicted, and had sought relief by now lying, now rising, and found no remedy: there came to him a certain devout laic to visit him: and compassionating him he said in comfort: “Get up and come with me to the fire: I hope it will do you good as I also have experienced in myself and in others troubled with this pain.” The brother at once consented to his advice: and went down from the dormitory with the pains still unrelieved. Coming therefore to the door of the choir he opened the door: desiring to call upon the help of the Lord. He entered the choir therefore: and knelt down before the high altar on the kneeler in presence of the Sacrament. And when he had commenced to pray in the sight of the Lord and before the holy relics enclosed on the altar: the pain gradually ceased. And taking courage he prayed the more until all the pain had ceased. Then rising he gave thanks to God and to His saints and to St. Pantaleon the martyr of Christ: whose feast it then was and whom he loved with a sincere heart. Afterwards with joy of mind going round the altar and devoutly kissing the door of the Sacrament, he went down to the other altars set in the Church, praying and giving thanks and he recovered so far: that he was able the same day to go with the brethren to labour and to the choir.

ANOTHER

A lay servant in a certain house of our Order went to the Church for the sake of devotion to pray: but by the temptation of the devil and overcome

by sloth he commenced to sleep there. And when he was lying back to rest: he saw in a dream a venerable Lady standing over him: and saying these words: “If thou wilt sleep: rise from this and go to thy bed. For this place was not made for sleeping: but for watching and praying therein.” And he terrified by the vision at once arose: and acknowledging himself guilty narrated these things to others as a warning of correction that they should not sleep in the house of prayer.

ANOTHER

A certain poor woman loving the things that are of God, used frequently to visit the Church: and willingly heard the word of God preached. One day coming from the Church: she was asked what good she had retained of the sermon. And answering briefly she said: “I cannot tell you much: but I have heard this well and retained it, that I do not wish to sin any more.” Well and prudently she answered: who took with her the fruit of a good sermon, not to sin any more. Whence Our Saviour in the gospel said to the devout woman: “Blessed are they who hear the word of God: and keep it.”

Here end the Sermons to the Novices Regular.

THE CHRONICLE OF THE CANONS REGULAR OF MOUNT SAINT AGNES

THOMAS A KEMPIS

E-BOOK ALSO AVAILABLE IN PAPERBACK.

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Τί δῆτα οἰόμεθα, εἴ τῳ γένοιτο αὐτὸ τὸ καλὸν ἰδεῖν, εἰλικρινές, καθαρὸν, ἄμικτον, ἀλλὰ μὴ
ἀνάπλεων σαρκῶν τε ἀνθρωπίνων καὶ χρωμάτων καὶ ἄλλης πολλῆς φλυαρίας θνητῆς, ἀλλ' αὐτὸ τὸ
θεῖον καλὸν δύναιτο μονοειδὲς κατιδεῖν.

CONTENTS

THE CHRONICLE OF THE CANONS REGULAR OF MOUNT SAINT AGNES

PREFACE

THE CHRONICLE OF THE CANONS REGULAR OF MOUNT ST. AGNES

CHAPTER I

Of the first founders of the Monastery at Mount St. Agnes, and how Master Gerard Groote first pointed out this place to them

CHAPTER II

Of the building of the first House on Mount St. Agnes

CHAPTER III

Concerning the names of the first Brothers and their labours

CHAPTER IV

Of the scanty food and raiment of the Brothers, and how wondrously God did provide for them

CHAPTER V

Of the consecration of the first chapel and altar at Mount St. Agnes

CHAPTER VI

Of the year and place in which the first four Brothers were invested

CHAPTER VII

How the monastery was removed from Westerhof to Mount St. Agnes

CHAPTER VIII

How John Kempen was chosen as the first Prior of Mount St. Agnes

CHAPTER IX

How the Burial-ground at Mount St. Agnes was consecrated

CHAPTER X

Of the Brothers who were invested by John of Kempen, the first Prior

CHAPTER XI

Of the death of Brother Wolfard, Priest in the Monastery of Mount St. Agnes

CHAPTER XII

How Brother William Vorniken was chosen to be the second Prior in the House of Mount St.

Agnes

CHAPTER XIII

Of the death of Brother Nicholas Kreyenschot

CHAPTER XIV

Of the consecration of our Church and of four Altars in the House of Mount St. Agnes

CHAPTER XV

Of the death of the beloved Father John Ummen, the first Founder of the Monastery of Mount St. Agnes

CHAPTER XVI

Of the pestilence that afflicted mankind, and how some of our Brothers died in this plague

CHAPTER XVII

Of the death of William, son of Seger, a Priest in Hasselt

CHAPTER XVIII

Of the death of our most reverend Lord Frederic, Bishop of Utrecht

CHAPTER XIX

Of the death of Brother John Vos of Huesden, who was the second Prior at Windesem

CHAPTER XX

How Brother Theodoric of Kleef was chosen to be the third Prior of the House on the Mount

CHAPTER XXI

Of the death of Brother Egbert formerly Sub-Prior at the House on the Mount

CHAPTER XXII

How our Brothers and other Religious were driven from the land by reason of the Interdict

CHAPTER XXIII

Of the return of our Brothers from Frisia to Mount St. Agnes

CHAPTER XXIV

Of the death of Brother John of Kempen, the first Prior of Mount St. Agnes

CHAPTER XXV

How Theodoric of Kleef, third Prior of the House on the Mount laid down his office, and was absolved therefrom

CHAPTER XXVI

How Brother Henry of Deventer was chosen to be the fourth Prior of the House of Mount St. Agnes

CHAPTER XXVII

How Father Henry, the fourth Prior, resigned his office, and how Father George was chosen to be the fifth Prior

CHAPTER XXVIII

Of the ancient Reliquary of St. Agnes, and how it was gotten

CHAPTER XXIX

Of the death of Brother Henry, son of William, the fourth Prior of our House

SO FAR THE CHRONICLE WAS WRITTEN BY THOMAS OF KEMPEN; THE RESIDUE
THEREOF WAS DONE BY ANOTHER

FROM THE CHRONICLE OF OUR BROTHER THOMAS OF KEMPEN CONCERNING
MATTERS NOT PERTAINING TO OUR HOUSE

CHAPTER I

Concerning the year in which that reverend man, Florentius of Wevelichoven, was made Bishop
of Utrecht

CHAPTER II

Of the death of John Ruesbroeck, first Prior of the Groenendaal

CHAPTER III

Of the death of the venerable Master Gerard Groote, a man most devout

CHAPTER IV

Of the great eulogy passed upon Gerard by a certain doctor

CHAPTER V

How, after his death, the number of the Devout and the Order of Regulars did increase

CHAPTER VI

Of the consecration of the Church, and the investiture of the first Brothers in Windesem

CHAPTER VII

Of the death of John de Gronde, a Priest

CHAPTER VIII

Of the death of the most Reverend Florentius of Wevelichoven, Bishop of Utrecht

CHAPTER IX

How Frederick of Blanckenheim was chosen to be Bishop

CHAPTER X

How the monastery at Northorn was founded

CHAPTER XI

Of the death of that most devout Priest Florentius, Vicar of the Church of Deventer

CHAPTER XII

Of the death of Everard of Eza, a Curate in Almelo and a great master of physic

CHAPTER XIII

Of the death of the Priest Amilius that succeeded Florentius at Deventer

CHAPTER XIV

Of the first investiture of the Sisters of our Order in Diepenvene near Deventer

CHAPTER XV

How the monastery in Budiken was reformed

CHAPTER XVI

Of the death of Gerard Kalker, a devout Priest, and Rector of the House of Clerks

CHAPTER XVII

Of the death of Henry of Gouda, a devout Priest, at Zwolle

CHAPTER XVIII

How the Sisters in Bronope were invested

CHAPTER XIX

The death of Wermbold the Priest

CHAPTER XX

Of the death of John Cele, Rector of the School at Zwolle

CHAPTER XXI

Concerning John Brinckerinck, a disciple of Master Gerard

CHAPTER XXII

Of the death of Gisbert Dou, Rector of the Sisters at Amsterdam

CHAPTER XXIII

As to the gaining of Indulgences at the stations in Rome

CHAPTER XXIV

The letter of the Cardinal of Bologna

A LETTER CONCERNING THE FIRST INSTITUTION OF THE MONASTERY AT WINDESEM

I. Preface

II. The history of the origin of the New Devotion

III. Of them by whom this land was turned to the Faith of Christ

IV. A lamentation over the waning of the aforesaid fervour

V. Of the rise of the New Devotion in our land

VI. Of Master Gherard Groet

VII. Of his death

VIII. Concerning Florentius and his companions

IX. How like things were done in other cities

- [X. Of the names of the Fathers and Rectors of the first congregations](#)
- [XI. Of the multiplication of the devout, especially of virgins](#)
- [XII. How a certain monk of Cologne was put to confusion](#)
- [XIII. How the Sisters were examined](#)
- [XIV. Concerning Master Bernard de Reyda](#)
- [XV. Of the origin of the House at Windesem](#)
- [XVI. Concerning Brother Bertold, and the site of this monastery](#)
- [XVII. Of the goodwill and consent of Florentius the Lord Bishop](#)
- [XVIII. Of the first Brothers of this monastery](#)
- [XIX. The praise of the early Fathers](#)
- [XX. How the Brothers aforesaid were promoted in other monasteries](#)
- [XXI. Of the pattern of virtue left for us by the Fathers](#)
- [XXII. Of their simplicity and poverty](#)
- [XXIII. Of their Victual](#)
- [XXIV. Of their Vesture](#)
- [XXV. How they avoided all occasion of scandal](#)
- [XXVI. Of their Charity](#)
- [XXVII. Concerning Gherard of Renen](#)
- [XXVIII. Of the privileges obtained for the binding together of the Chapters](#)
- [XXIX. Of their manner of holding the Chapter](#)
- [XXX. The Conclusion](#)

THE CHRONICLE OF THE CANONS REGULAR OF MOUNT SAINT AGNES

THE Chronicle of Mount St. Agnes is the only work of Thomas à Kempis of which no English translation has yet appeared, and even in its original form the book is not readily accessible to readers, since the only text is that published by Peter and John Beller of Antwerp in 1621. The ordinary collections of the works of à Kempis do not contain the Chronicle, although there is no doubt as to the authenticity of the book, which is of considerable importance to students of the movement known as “The New Devotion,” and to those who are interested in the Brotherhood of the Common Life. The last nine pages of the Latin text have been added by an anonymous writer, and carry on the chronicle from the year 1471, in which à Kempis dies, to 1477, but since this portion of the book is included in the first printed edition, and contains a notice of the author written by a contemporary member of the community, I have included the addition in the present translation of the Chronicle.

The Mother House of the Chapter to which the Monastery of Mount St. Agnes belonged, was the Monastery at Windesheim, of which we have a full account from the pen of John Buschius, a younger contemporary of à Kempis. This work is too long to be included in the present volume, although the Antwerp edition before mentioned puts the two Chronicles together; Busch’s “Chronicon Windesemense” will therefore appear separately; but as the account of the foundation of the Mother House, written by William Voern, or Vorniken, supplements the information given by à Kempis, a translation of it is annexed to this book. The writer was Prior of Mount St. Agnes before his promotion to the same office in the Superior House, and it was under his rule that à Kempis spent the early years of his priesthood, those years in which he composed the first part at least of the great work with which his name is associated. William vorniken

also tells in outline the story of the conversion of the Low Countries to Christianity by Anglo-Saxon missionaries, and for all these reasons it has been thought that his "letter" may be of interest to English readers.

It will be seen that the spelling of proper names is both peculiar and variable, but the principle observed in this translation has been to adopt the spelling given in the text, except in cases where variation is evidently the result of a printer's error, and in those instances in which the writer translated names, e.g., Hertzogenbosch appears in the Chronicle as Buscoducis, and gerard is called sometimes Groote, Groot, or Groet, and sometimes Magnus.

Further accounts of the lives of some of the Brothers who are mentioned in this Chronicle may be found in a translation of another work of à Kempis published last year, and entitled "The founders of the New Devotion," Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co.; and the history of the other houses of the Chapter to which the Monastery of Mount St. Agnes belonged, has been treated exhaustively by Dr. J. G. R. Acquoy, "Het Klooster te Windesheim." Utrecht, 1880.

For the English reader the best accounts of the Brotherhood and of à Kempis himself, are the works of Rev. S. Kettlewell and Sir F. R. Cruise. The former, however, is quite unreliable as a translator, and draws untenable deductions from extracts whose purport he has misunderstood; but the latter is both accurate and interesting, being in fact the leading English authority on the subject which he has made his own.

PREFACE

THE pious desire of certain of our Brothers hath constrained me to put together a short chronicle concerning the beginning of our House, and the first foundation of our Monastery on Mount St. Agnes, that the said chronicle may be a comfort to them that are now alive, and a memorial for them that come after. Wherefore humbly assenting to their pious desires, I have gathered together a few things out of many, and these I have seen with mine own eyes, or have heard from the Elders of our House, or else have gathered from the writings of others.

Some of the Elders who first dwelt in this House have told us that or ever there was a monastery builded in this place, and before any man had yet come hither to serve God, there did often appear to the shepherds and to them that dwelt near, visions of men in white raiment who seemed to go in procession round the mount: and the signification and meaning hereby portended became clear enough afterward as time went by, when the monastery by God's grace begun in this place by a few Brothers and afterward finished with much toil came into being and a great company of Brothers dwelt therein—for then it was seen how the Devout Congregation of Canons Regular being clad in white raiment did serve God with devotion, singing hymns and psalms and celebrating Mass; also reciting the proper Canonical Hours to His praise every day, and praying for our benefactors, both living and dead, especially for them that are buried in this Monastery.

THE CHRONICLE OF THE CANONS
REGULAR OF MOUNT ST. AGNES

CHAPTER I

Of the first founders of the Monastery at Mount St. Agnes, and how Master Gerard Groote first pointed out this place to them

THE House of Mount St. Agnes, which lieth outside the walls of the town of Zwolle, and on the eastern side thereof, had its origin and completion in this way.

The place used to be called in the vulgar tongue Mount Nemel and lieth not far from Zwolle, but one may traverse the distance in the space of an hour. Now there were in the State of Zwolle certain faithful men who had been turned wholly to God by Master Gerard Groote. These men had builded them an house, in a suburb belonging to the city, near an ancient Convent of Béguines, and here they served God humbly and with devotion. Amongst these the chief was John of Ummen, a man dedicated to God, and greatly beloved by Gerard; and with him there abode likewise Wychmann Rurinch, Reyner, son of Leo of Renen, and two or three others that were well disposed. Moreover, a certain Clerk that dwelt in those parts named Wittecoep, had joined himself to them and lived among them devoutly. There was also the mother of John of Ummen, named Regeland, a widow of ripe age, who ministered to the necessities of these servants of God, giving good heed to the care of the house as a faithful Martha. Most gladly would she listen to the Word of God, and, like Mary, was never sated with the sweetness of the Holy Scriptures that were read.

When any one at meal-time read somewhat incorrectly and stammered over the words, this venerable woman said to him “Read no more and do not defile the Word of God lest harm come to holy things and they that hear

be offended in thee. Let another read that hath better skill thereto, that we may all understand and be edified.”

After no long time this good woman came to the end of her life on the Thursday in Holy Week after Mass was ended, and she was buried at Zwolle by her friends and the Brothers. From that hour and day, for three whole days, her son John Ummen fasted from every kind of food to promote his mother’s salvation, and he neither ate nor drank aught until the dawning of the day of the Lord’s. Passover, and yet was he as whole in body and in strength as if he had been well fed every day.

And as these servants of God lived in poverty and at the common charge it came to pass that many men that were in the world, considering their holy life, came together to them, being eager to serve God and to leave the world, in the hope of an eternal gain. Meanwhile it happened that the venerable Master Gerard Groote came to Zwolle about the beginning of Lent, and of necessity abode there certain days, since he was anxious to comfort his poor children, for it was his desire to refresh with the word of consolation those whom he had drawn to leave the world. So a very great company of people came together to his preaching, and many devoutly submitted themselves to his counsel, for sometimes he would preach two sermons in one day so as to water the chosen vineyard of the Lord. And if he had determined to preach after the midday meal, he would remain praying in the Church or walking in meditation about the churchyard, taking no food himself, while he awaited the return of the people. For this reason they that loved his holy discourses were unwilling to stay away too long, but would sit them down in the churchyard or in the Church, and take beforehand places that were convenient and near the pulpit, so that at the proper hour they might the more readily hear and understand the Word of God. And when Gerard had done his faithful preaching, each would return to his own concerns rejoicing with eager heart, and praising God for all the things he had heard. And they marvelled above measure at the humble bearing of the Master, and were edified thereby, that he, a man of so great fame and knowledge, one that had friends great and famous, should go about the streets with so meek an aspect, and showing little care for his attire; for he cared not at all about worldly things, and sought only to gain a great usury of souls for God. He was well favoured, kindly in word, and courteous to all, so that any man whatever, whether a stranger or born in the

land, even though poor and unknown, might speak to him and receive from him some discourse upon the things of God. The good saw this and rejoiced thereat, but the froward gnashed with their teeth and spake evil of Gerard. A certain man, therefore, one of the great ones of the State, came near to him, and rebuked his words and deeds, for the man himself took more pleasure at that time in worldliness than in the things of God. “Why,” said he, “dost thou disquiet us, and bring in new customs? Cease from this preaching, and do not disturb or frighten men.” But Gerard made answer with wisdom and constancy: “I would not willingly suffer you to go to Hell,” and the man said again with indignation: “Let us go thither in peace,” but the kindly and good Master replied: “I will not do so; if thou wilt not hear, there will be some who will gladly give ear”—but we must return to our history.

When the most beloved Master was sojourning in Zwolle for the purpose of preaching the Word, some of his disciples aforementioned who dwelt together there came to him secretly and confessed that they desired to live a life further removed from that of the world, for they could not bear to mingle with worldlings without suffering hurt to their spiritual life; and they said that they would choose to dwell without the City if he should agree thereto. They begged him therefore, as loving sons speaking to their father, to condescend to go with them some little space outside the City to look for a place convenient wherein to live quietly. Then Gerard assented to their pious prayers, and when the next day dawned he prepared for the journey and taking with him the brothers Wychmann, Reyner, Henry and James Wittecoep, he went with them towards the mountains of Nemel to a place that was foreordained of God, and separated from the multitude; for men were seldom seen to come thither or to pass by, and patches of thorns and nettles grew here and there upon the hills and valleys. So as they went forth the wind beat against them, but neither rain nor wind could stay the Master from the straight course, and he went on rejoicing and said pleasantly to his companions: “I will go before you and shield you from the wind with my cloak.” But as they drew near to the place, they went up to the top of an hill, and having made a circuit round the mountains for some little space, they at last beheld a valley, that was narrow and deep, upon the northern side of the mountain, and Gerard’s disciples asked him a question, saying: “See! most beloved Master, how good is this place, and how private; here we may hide for the love of Christ, as of old the holy Eremites did hide in the mountains

and in caves in the earth.” But this they said in simplicity of heart out of the fervent zeal of their devotion, and their desire for a life more remote from the world, for they thought there they could be hid, screened by the thickets of brushwood. But the Master being most discreet and wise in counsel soon dissuaded them from this purpose, for a place that lieth low doth never suit the human complexion, nor would a place so narrow avail in future for many men to dwell in. So they withdrew their feet prudently therefrom and visited another mountain that was near; and their wise leader saw that on the south side thereof was a level place fit for crops, and he said to them that stood by: “Place your tabernacle at the foot of this mountain—then shall ye be able to make a little garden for your herbs and fruits on the level place toward the south. If the Lord grant me life I will be here often with you.” Having visited this place and walked about it through God’s inspiration, they returned again to the City together, leaving the issue of the matter to the good pleasure of the Almighty. But in the same year the beloved Master Gerard, that light and lamp of devotion that shone upon his country of Utrecht, was taken away from this world to receive the reward of his labours, and he went up from the vale of our lamentations to the mount of everlasting bliss.

CHAPTER II

Of the building of the first House on Mount St. Agnes

BUT after the passing of the Master, who must ever be held in remembrance, the new branch of his planting ceased not to bear fruit; moreover the heaven shed dew upon it from above, as Gerard at the end of his life had promised, so that our land yielded increase in her season; and the men above named continued to carry into effect the intention which they had formed in their minds. The chief mover in this holy work was James Wittecoep, the son of one Thomas Coep a man who had been a magistrate in the town of Zwolle; and he did all that in him lay to promote the foundation of an house on the mountain for the servants of God. Goswin Tyasen, who afterward became a Canon Regular at Windesheim, assisted him in this business, for he, relying upon the goodness of God, and having the ear of his fellows, was eagerly desirous to move them to choose this place. There were others also of like purpose, but these two were the chief men amongst them, and they all relied upon the help of their friends, but especially upon the co-operation of the mercy of God by Whose nod all things are determined. Therefore they besought the heritors of Bercem and Nemel, joint owners of the farm, to grant them a portion of the land, and the site where now the Monastery is builded, and the owners thereof did freely grant their request and gave them the land for the Brothers to dwell in. When they had obtained the power to build upon the spot pointed out to them aforetime by Master Gerard, they set in order a small house, at the bottom of the mountain, that had been given to them by a certain matron, and some labourers assisted them in this work. This house was builded of logs and earth, but was only roofed in above with common thatch. But

when this poor little habitation, on an humble site on the lower part of the mountain was builded, no man dwelt there, because it lacked household stuff; yet certain of the Brothers whose hearts were set on the completion of the work would visit it, and sometimes one or two would sleep upon the straw there, in their clothes, but for their food they either brought somewhat with them or returned to their friends in the town.

Scarce have I known of any place or house that was begun in so great poverty, and yet came, in despite of divers hindrances, to so great an increase of prosperity; but Jesus our Saviour Himself began in the deepest poverty, and His lack did make rich Holy Church. This house therefore, poor at first, unknown and hidden, did deserve in process of time to be more widely increased through the blessing of our Father in Heaven, Who doth ever turn His Face toward lowly things, but doth look from afar upon the lofty. Foras wealthier persons came and brought their goods into the common stock, the place whose beginning was so poor, and its outward appearance so lowly, grew to be a yet fairer vineyard of the Lora of Sabaoth. For the tillers of the farm and the country folk of the land of Bercem and Nemel, seeing that an house was now builded on the mountain and that devout men had come together there to serve God in humility and simplicity, gave and assigned to them and their successors the aforesaid place in honour of Holy Religion, and that prayers might be offered for them and their friends; which grant they did also confirm in writing to any others whom God Almighty should see fit to associate with them. In regard to this holy gift and this pious request made by consent of the owners of the place, there was but one deed executed relating to the first and original foundation. This is attested by the seals of many honest men, and in it is given a short description of the manner of the Common Life and of the wholesome rule so far as this same was applicable to the conditions of the Brotherhood in the early days. These things were done and finished in the year of the Lord 1386 on the Friday before Palm Sunday, and a year and a half after the death of the aforesaid Master Gerard.

CHAPTER III

Concerning the names of the first Brothers and their labours

THESE are the names of those first Brothers, the devout men who began to build the House of Mount St. Agnes and to dwell there. First James Wittecoep, the chief promoter of our House and the earnest keeper thereof in all things. He afterward became a Priest in Zwolle and served the Altar in the Hospice there, where he died after making a good confession. Secondly, there was John Ummen, son of Assetrin, whose mother was called Regeland. He, though blind and unlettered, was yet the familiar friend and devout disciple of Master Gerard, and he became the first Rector of the House, being a good man and a comfortable. Thirdly, there was Wychmann Roerinck van Hellender, a pattern of poverty and patience; he, putting aside his friends, who were many, became an humble hearer of Gerard, and was Procurator to this poor little congregation.

Other upright men also were joined to these chief Brothers, being drawn to give up the world by the sweet savour of the reputation of this new and holy congregation. Their names are worthy of the fame of a good memorial, for they were shining lights of holy poverty, obedience, continence, and daily toil. The first was Reyner, son of Leo of Renen of the diocese of Utrecht, who often made pilgrimages out of his devotion; but afterward became converted by Gerard's preaching and gave up the world. The second was Reyner the younger, a man without reproach, poor and accustomed to toil. He, too, came from Renen which is in the diocese of Münster. The third was called Gerard the cook, for he at the first was cook to the House, but afterward became the porter, a man fervent in deed, and devout in prayer, who was born at Deventer. All these knew Gerard Groote

in the flesh, and often heard him preach the Word of God among the people. By these humble, simple-hearted, and devout little servants of Christ—these who did verily despise the world—was our House on mount Nemel begun, which House after that it became a Monastery was called Mount St. Agnes. Moreover by little and little several devout clerks and lay folk from the neighbouring towns and from far off districts came to join these men, and they earned their daily bread by the labour of their hands. For none was allowed to avoid his task, none might go about idly, neither did any dare to talk of worldly matters, but all were taught to labour for the common good, and to call often upon God in prayer at the appointed hours after the manner of the holy Fathers in Egypt: for these, too, did labour with their hands, but during the hours of toil they never ceased from prayer. Likewise they had received this rule from Master Gerard, that none ought to be accepted save such as were willing to labour with their hands and take part in the Common Life. Wherefore the clerks were diligent in writing the books of Holy Scriptures, and the lay folk busied them with bodily labour and tillage. Some also followed the tailor's craft, others wove wool and flax; others again made baskets and mats, or did divers tasks for the good of the community at the bidding of their Superior. Outwardly indeed they led a life of poverty and toil for Christ's sake, but the love of the heavenly life made sweet the present indigence. If one went forth on any business, he would first utter some short word concerning the things of God, or would speak the Name of Jesus, and some other would reply with "Christ" or "Mary" as his devotion impelled him. For a great while they lived together in this companionship, and until the time of the foundation of the Monastery, all alike, both Clerks and Lay folk obeyed their first Rector, John of Ummen, a zealous man and well skilled in spiritual things. With such diligence did they follow the virtue of obedience that none dared even to drive in a nail, or do any little thing without the knowledge of the Rector or Procurator, for they received fraternal correction by way of warning for the least neglect, nor was there given any place for excuse, but every man did humbly acknowledge his fault, and was forward to promise amendment, But if any were not ready to obey, or should cling stubbornly to what was good in his own eyes Father John would chide him more sternly as the manner of the fault and the quality of the person did demand. Sometimes fired with yet greater zeal for discipline and in order to affright the other Brothers he

would say to some that were ill content, or slow to take his orders: “Lo! the door standeth open. If any will go forth, let him go: I would rather have one that is obedient than many that are disobedient. By the favour of God I may readily find others who will cheerfully do what ye refuse.” Thus by the voice of his authority he would curb the ill-contentment of some. Also he used to say that unwilling and sluggish Brothers were false prophets who thought that naught was profitable save what was good in their own eyes.

Once it happened that the elder Reyner was sent out with some other Brothers to guard the reeds, lest the cattle that passed by might chew and injure them. But when the time for the midday meal came all the rest went in, and Reyner alone remained on watch in the fields, and afterwards he, too, went in to take his sustenance. Then he was asked wherefore he had not come in with the others at the appointed hour, and he answered that he had remained outside thinking to do the more good thereby, and prevent danger to their stuff. But Father John replied, “Would that the beasts had despoiled all our goods so that thou hadst come in with the rest as in duty bound. This would have pleased me better.” Then was Reyner deeply penitent, and groaning he prostrated himself humbly on the ground asking for pardon, and saying that he would never do the like again. But yet John was full of comfort and kindness to those that were tempted or oppressed with any weighty matter, for he had the gracious power of consoling all, whatever might be the cause for which they came to him. Master Gerard himself often sent divers persons to be instructed by him in the way of God, saying to them, “Go to blind John of Ummen, that devout and upright man, and whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.” He also bore this witness about John, saying “That blind man hath better sight than all that are in Zwolle,” meaning that though he lacked natural sight, yet was he illumined inwardly by the radiance of truth, and showed the way of eternal salvation to many that resorted to him, and gave them the guidance of the true light.

Among these early Brothers so great was the zeal of their love that each strove to surpass the other in doing work that was humble; and they were eager in lowly service one to the other. So while one was asleep another would rise up earlier than was customary and finish his work; but if any were somewhat slower in going forth to his labour, some other that was quicker would take his place, and it was often found that some task was finished though none knew who had done it. By this means was charity

shown in deed, and humility of heart was preserved, according to the saying, "Love to be unknown."

All that dwelt in the House were stirred up by a like devotion to do menial tasks and fulfil humble offices. Wherefore the clerks and weavers would not avoid the work in the fields, but when called thereto at harvest time they would go forth with the rest to gather in the sheaves of corn. Following the rule of obedience, and acting for the common good, they made the hay, or dug the ground, or planted herbs, whenever such work must needs be done. So, too, holy David doth praise them that fear God, and doth minister sweet words of consolation to them that labour well, saving: "Thou shalt eat the labour of thy hands, well is thee and happy shalt thou be."

CHAPTER IV

Of the scanty food and raiment of the Brothers, and how wondrously God did provide for them

WHO can tell how poor was their food while they laboured at their daily toil? Their victual was coarse, their drink ungenerous, their raiment simple and rude, so that naught did minister to the lusts of the flesh, but the needs of the body were satisfied soberly enough. They were often compelled to eat food that was of evil savour through lack of better victual; but constant toil and hunger made herbs and pulse to be pleasant to the taste. Fish was given to the community seldom, and eggs more rarely still, but yet of their goodwill the Brothers would give these to the sick, or to strangers, if by any means they could get such things. Wherefore one hath said, “When the reign of poverty is long, pleasure doth endure but a little space.”

On certain days the rule allowed them to eat flesh meats, but if at such times a larger mess was set before them, yet was it not more daintily cooked. Furthermore, certain amongst them, who while they dwelt in the world had been taught to love a very different fare, were now content with scanty and coarse food, doing great violence to their lusts thereby; but yet they bore all these things patiently after that saying of Christ, “The Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.” Sometimes when supper was ended scarce aught did remain to be divided amongst them on the day following; at other times there was lack of utensils or cooking pots, or suitable food would fail; but God the Maker of all things, who of old did feed the people in the wilderness, did not desert the Brothers on the Mount. So it once came about that when they had

consumed almost all their food, Gerard the cook being anxious for the morrow, made his lack known to Father John, saying sadly: "What shall I set before them to-morrow?" But John consoled his sadness with kindly words, and exhorted him to have faith in the Lord, who doth not fail them that hope in Him. And when that day had drawn on to evening, Everard of Eza, Curate of Almelo, came unexpectedly in his chariot as if sent by God to comfort the poor. He was received by the Brothers eagerly and reverently, and they brought him in as if the Hospice was his own, for he loved the House and all that dwelt therein by reason of their utter poverty and their simple manner of life, and because their desire was to hinder none, but to profit all men; moreover he was united to Father John by a special bond of love. Wherefore, when he had determined to travel to Windesem, or had business at Zwolle, he delighted to come first to the Brothers on the Mount; and being a mighty shepherd of souls as well as a most skilful physician, he alighted from his carriage and fed souls that were in want thereof with the fodder of the Holy Word, and likewise cheered the faint of heart by giving them the food they lacked. He had brought with him fine meal, and flesh, and he gave the same to the Brothers for their common use; and they receiving the gifts he offered were all comforted by their better fortune, and gave thanks to God and to Everard that of his bounty he had provided for them and succoured them in their so great need. At another time, also, divers poor Clerks had been called from Zwolle to help them in some work, wherefore certain of the Brothers went down to fish in the brook Vecht, whose course is near to the mountain. So they let down their nets in the name of Jesus, and by the grace of God, who made all waters, there were taken of the fish called bream a number equal to the number of their guests.

At that time Gerard Bronchorst, a Canon of Utrecht, and a great friend to the devout, was in authority at Deventer, and he gave two cow to our Brothers on the Mount, but forasmuch as God would prove their patience and increase their faith, one of the cows died, though the other one remained whole. And the wondrous goodness of God provided that the one should give so large a yield of milk as to suffice for all the Brothers, though they would have thought that they would scarce get enough from two. Then was seen the fulfilment of the word of the prophet Esaias, who saith: "It

shall come to pass in that day that a man shall nourish a young cow, and for the abundance of the milk he shall eat butter.”

At the beginning of their common life the Brothers were despised by worldlings, and they bore patiently the derision of them that passed by; also they were called by vile names in scorn, and suffered much evil speaking and many injuries from the envious; but the patience of the good overcame the malice of the froward, and the freedom of their good conscience gave them the greater joy because of the scorn that was cast upon them. For although men that were ill-disposed would insult these poor little ones of Christ, and blushed not to speak evil of the innocent, yet many that feared God would praise their holy conversation; such men assisted them with kindly deeds and help, being moved thereto by pious reasons.

One of the community, a Lay Donate and an upright man, was employed in feeding the cattle, and as he was driving an herd of swine in the field he met an ancient crone, who began to abuse him and to hurl unseemly words at him. And the devout Brother answered her gently, saying, “Good dame, tell me my faults freely, and chide me sternly, for I greatly lack such chastisement,” but the woman hearing this was smitten with inward remorse, and said in a changed voice: “What should it profit me to help you to the kingdom of heaven, but myself to hell!” for she perceived that by her chiding the Brother earned fresh merit, but she punishment for her frowardness.

It came to pass that as two of the Brothers were at work together out of doors, one by mischance did unwittingly hurt the other somewhat, and he who had done the injury prayed the other to pardon him for God’s sake. But the Brother who was hurt in body was whole in heart, and said: “Even if thou hadst slain my father I would freely pardon thee,” and those that stood by and heard his saying were edified, and glorified God for the gracious words that proceeded from the sufferer’s mouth. May these few things that I have told of the early deeds of our elders be pleasing to the reader.

CHAPTER V

Of the consecration of the first chapel and altar at Mount St. Agnes

ON the Vigil of the Feast of St. John the Baptist, and in the year of our Lord 1395, was consecrated the first chapel on the Mount of St. Agnes the Virgin, and the first altar therein was dedicated in honour of that saint, and of the most blessed Mary Magdalene, by Hubert, the Suffragan and Vicar-General for Pontifical Acts to our most Reverend Father and Lord, Frederic, Bishop of Utrecht.

And after the rite of Consecration, when the Dedication Festival was at hand, being the Sunday after the Nativity of St. John, Reyner, the Curate of Zwolle, came and was the first to sing a Solemn Mass in the chapel, wherein he offered the sacrifice of perpetual praise to God, for he was friendly disposed to the Brothers, and at unity with them. So from that day forward the Holy Mysteries of our Redemption were celebrated there by Priests and Clerks, and on festivals, hymns to the praise of God were sung to stir up devotion of heart.

Having made this holy beginning, the lowly band of Brothers was kindled to a still greater love of the worship of God, but in after time, when the new and larger church in the monastery was builded and consecrated, the dedication of this former chapel was transferred to the latter by licence of the Bishop, but as was more seemly, it was dedicated first to St. Mary and afterward to St. Agnes. After this, when nearly three years had gone by, the desire of the Brothers to build a monastery burned fiercely within them, and the elder amongst them especially, with their Rector, were eager to do this work and carry it forward with all speed, for certain urgent reasons did compel them. They saw that without monastic discipline the way of life in

the House could not continue to be ordered duly, and therefore they determined that the habit of an holy order must be their refuge, for they were instant to make prudent provision for themselves and those that should come after, and to stop the mouths of them that spoke evil, because such men did strive with the cunning of this world to disturb the lowly and simple lives of the Brothers. Moreover, though they were still poor and had not things suitable to their need—either proper buildings or service books—yet did they try to begin the work, trusting in the mercy of God and heartened by the help of good men. And one spake of them and marvelled that men so poor should wish to build a monastery and to take religious vows, though they had no hope of increase, but Father John of Ummen, ever a lover of poverty, answered him, saying: “I have always heard from holy men that poverty is good, being both the cause of all good and the means of increasing the same.”

CHAPTER VI

Of the year and place in which the first four Brothers were invested

IN the year of the Lord 1398, on the 18th day of January, being the Feast of St. Prisca, Virgin and Martyr, our Right Reverend Lord Frederic of Blanckenheim, the renowned Bishop of Utrecht, issued his license to the devout priests, Egbert van Lingen, and Wolfard, the son of Matthias, and to the other Clerks and Lay Brothers that dwelt on Mount St. Agnes, in Nemel, near Zwolle, for it was his desire to increase the glory of God, and to promote the cause of Holy Religion. By the full authority vested in him he gave them leave to build a monastery for the Order of Canons Regular in any fit and proper place in his diocese, so that they might worthily and devoutly serve as the soldiers of Almighty God in the Regular Order, following the rule of the blessed Augustine. So having obtained this licence in their favour, they chose a place in the freehold land that is called Westerhof, in the district of Gherner and the parish of Dalvessen, the curate of which parish, who was an honourable man named Frederic Denter, giving his assent to their purpose. They determined to set their monastery here because they had found no other site that was fitting, although they sought anxiously elsewhere a place of habitation. At this time the men of Zwolle would not suffer a monastery to be builded upon the Mount at Nemel, though this was done in after days by the favour of God, but Egbert Mulart had given them this land at Westerhof. He was a most upright man, and one in authority, being of gentle lineage in Hasselt, and he was a trusty friend and a special patron of the devout. Here then they builded for their first need a small chapel, which they let consecrate in honour of Mary, the most Blessed Mother of God, and also other buildings of moderate size, and

they reverently called the place “The Garden of the Blessed Mary,” in honour of Christ’s gentle Mother. When these things were done, the day drew nigh on which the Brothers of this House should be invested there. Now on the day of the Lord’s Annunciation, which is the solemn Feast of the Blessed Mary ever Virgin, Mother Church doth celebrate throughout all the world the first act of our Redemption. So that when that holy day had dawned with fair sunshine there came the Reverend Lord Hubert, Bishop of Yppuse, and Suffragan to our Lord Bishop of Utrecht, for he had been summoned thither upon that day. And when the waxen tapers and crosses and the other ornaments were ready, he there consecrated the burial ground, and the three altars, and then at the High Altar, which he had dedicated, he sung Mass with solemn music.

Afterward, in his reverend presence, and in the face of a large company of other religious, both Clerks and Lay, Brothers who had come together from every quarter to keep this Festival, the first four Brothers of our House were invested by that reverend and devout man, John Wale, Prior of the Regulars in the state of Zwolle, for he had been summoned for this very purpose. This number four did mystically signify the number of the four Evangelists, and the names of these Brothers, which are worthy to be cherished by them that come after, are here set down. The first was Brother Egbert of Lingen, who had been chosen for the priesthood by the Brothers on the Mount three years before this time.

The second was Brother Wolfard, son of Matthias of Medenblike, a priest of great art.

The third was John Ummen, a Clerk who came from Campen, a kinsman of John of Ummen, our first founder. The fourth was Dirk of Kleef, a Clerk who came from that state. These four made their profession on the same day, and when the Divine Mysteries had been celebrated, and their bodies had been refreshed, they spent the day in spiritual rejoicing and brotherly love. Brother Egbert was the Senior in standing and took the place of Rector of the House until a new Rector appointed by the Chapter should come; then he gave place to Brother Wolfard and stood humbly behind him. The Clerks who were not yet invested with the habit of the Order were these:—Wichbold, son of John of Deventer, Henry Huetinc of Deventer, John of Kempen, of the diocese of Cologne, Hermann of Kempen, of the same diocese.

After Easter, when a general Chapter was held by the Fathers at Windesem, these were received into the Order, and their names were set down and written as members of the Fellowship of Houses belonging to us: the Fathers also provided them a suitable Rector, and after a little space that religious and devout Brother, Egbert Lingen, was sent to them. He had been a member of the Monastery of St. Saviour, at Emsten, and for about a year, that is, until the coming of the new Prior, he ruled over the House, as will be shown hereafter. Throughout the summer of this same year the Pestilence was heavy at Deventer, Zwolle, Campen, and the neighbouring towns and districts, so that it often happened that twenty or thirty men were buried in one day in the divers parishes of these towns.

About this time and on the Feast of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist, died Reyner, Curate of Zwolle, and two priests that were, his chaplains. He was a good man and pitiful to the poor, and ever cherished a special devotion to St. John the Baptist. At this time also died many devout persons, both men and women.

CHAPTER VII

How the monastery was removed from Westerhof to Mount St. Agnes

IN the same year of the Lord 1398, on the 26th day of the month of August, two days before the Festival of our Holy Father Augustine, did that most kindly Lord Frederic, by the grace of God, Bishop of Utrecht, issue a further licence. He did ever most faithfully promote the interests of our House, and was our special patron, and he had compassion upon the Brothers who were invested a short time before at Westerhof, in that they were ill-content with the place, and ill-provided for there, by reason of divers hindrances and impediments that were not agreeable to the religious life. The Bishop therefore, hearing of these hindrances and the true causes thereof, gave them licence to transfer themselves and all their goods from the aforesaid place to Mount St. Agnes, so soon as might be convenient, and to retain the same rights and privileges as he had before conferred upon them. Thus for the second time they obtained his full and gracious consent to their desires, and Conrad Hengel, then Vice-Curate of Zwolle, likewise assented to their pious wishes.

Therefore on the eve of the day of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross they returned to the place that they had long possessed and where the greater number of their friends still continued to dwell, with blind John of Ummen; they left, however, some few Lay Brothers at Westerhof to arrange their affairs.

Moreover the Bishop of Utrecht had given them a licence for the consecration of a burial-ground for the use of the monastery that they should found on Mount St. Agnes. But when Hubert, the Bishop Suffragan, came for this purpose and entered into Zwolle, he was not allowed to

continue his journey to the Mount until the Magistrates had first spoken with the Lord Bishop of Utrecht, for they thought to dissuade him from his opinion. From this cause the consecration of the burial-ground was delayed for the space of a year, until the return of the Bishop of Utrecht, for the said Bishop during the year had gone to the Curia at Rome, and he ordered that the cause of both parties should be put off and await his coming and presence on his return. But when he had come back from Rome and entered his own country in safety, certain of our Brothers came to him and asked him once more to give permission for the consecration of the burial-ground, and he, yielding to the importunity of his friends, did freely grant their petition. So he issued his commands again and ordered the consecration of this place, for he loved it and paid no heed to the complaints of the adversaries, since he preferred the honour of God and the progress of religion rather than the unjust words of worldlings, who, as is well-known, do often oppose the desires of good folk. From that time forward he showed special love to the House on the Mount, and extended to it yet fuller patronage, so that one day when he was riding round the mountain on his way to Zwolle, he asked one of his companions, saying: "What is this place, and what manner of men dwell here?" and his Vicar answered him: "Beloved Lord, dost thou not yet know that place? This is thy monastery, this is Mount St. Agnes, and the Brothers of the Mount dwell there." And the Bishop made answer: "It is well—may God preserve them."

It came to pass in this same year, 1398, in the month of September, when the Plague was still amongst us that a well-disposed Lay Brother named John, son of Faber, who was smitten with the pestilence, came from Zwolle to the mountain, and sought hospitality in the name of God. And being received in charity, his disease grew heavy upon him, and he died on the Feast Day of St. Maurice the Martyr. But after his death certain of the Clerks and Lay folk, being infected with the Plague, were taken from this life after a little while, but several others grew whole of their sickness, for the Lord had mercy upon them.

Lastly, on the day after the Feast of St. Francis the Confessor died John, son of Nicolas of Campen, a Lay Brother of great age, who had been the gardener.

On the day of the translation of our holy Father, Augustine Gerard Bou left this bodily life. He was a man of great strength, who had been a farmer,

and his native land was Holland.

On the Feast of St. Calixtus, Pope and Martyr, died Hermann Restikey, a Clerk of the diocese of Cologne; he was born in the town of Kempen, and was well learned and skilled in singing and in binding books. When he drew near to death he asked that a taper might be lighted quickly and given into his hands, and holding this above his breast he began to say devoutly and often to repeat: “Mary, Mother of Grace, Mother of Mercy, do thou protect us from the enemy and receive us in the hour of death,” and having said this, he breathed forth his soul.

On the day after the Feast of the Eleven Thousand Holy Virgins, John of Kempen fell asleep in the Lord; he was a devout Clerk of the diocese of Cologne who had just been received into the Religious Order, but he died or ever he could take the habit, for death was beforehand with him. He was kinsman to the aforesaid Hermann, whom he had persuaded to withdraw from the life of the world when he was Sublector in the town of Campen. These greatly loved one another in life and death, they came from one city and province, they were of one heart in their good purpose, and alike steadfast therein. This John, who continued a longer space in the service of God, was a man of great kindliness and sobriety, and was well skilled in the work of husbandry. For at harvest time when all must labour more than usual he was diligent in helping therein. And sometimes at night he would gather in the crops of the poor, and often wearied himself by this work of piety; but in this year the weather was very rainy, and the crops were in such danger that he gathered in those that grew in the watery places, and binding them into sheaves carried them on his own shoulders out of reach of the waters.

On the Feast Day of the Saints Crispin and Crispian died Wichbold, son of John of Deventer, a man of good lineage. For a long time he lived a devout life in Zwolle, but afterward finished his days yet more devoutly on the Mount. Being an eager lover of the Scriptures he edified many by his holy discourse. On the Feast Day of St. Martin the Confessor, Henry of Deventer fell asleep in Christ; he was a Clerk and the companion and fellow citizen of Wichbold, and likewise a very humble and gentle man. One day he was plastering the inner walls of the cells in the dormitory of the Brotherhood with soft mortar in company with another Clerk. But it happened that as the mortar was somewhat violently dashed on to the wall

some did come through the cracks of the battens into Henry's face (for he was standing on the other side of the wall) and befouled him greatly. But he who had done the deed, looking to see who had been bespattered by the mortar, and seeing the Brother who was so greatly loved with his face befouled, implored his pardon in dolorous wise. But Henry was rather merry than vexed, and answered: "There is no hurt done, be not disturbed. I care not for it." So gentle was he that none ever saw him angered or heard him complain.

The day after the Feast of Brixius, Confessor and Bishop, died Hermann of Laer, a man of great age who came from Campen.

On the Vigil of St. Thomas the Apostle, died Gerlac ten Water, a Clerk of the town of Kampen. He had a deep devotion to the Blessed Virgin, and was still in the flower of his youth, but in this same year he left the world and his parents and entered the monastery with joy, and he made a good end to his life when came the time appointed for him to die. These were buried in the Chapel of St. Agnes, which afterward became the Chapter House, because there was no other consecrated ground in the which they could be buried. But as the space was very narrow, some were buried in a neighbouring spot, because it was hoped that a burial-ground would soon be consecrated there.

But in the year 1407, in the time of William Vorniken, the second Prior, and after the consecration of the new chapel, the bones of some of these Brothers were taken up and buried again in the other burial-ground on the western side of the chapel, where now several Lay Brothers who knew them lie buried also.

In the same year, on the Feast day of St. Martin, the Bishop, Brother Egbert Linghen; the first Rector, invested two converts; their names being Brother John, son of James of Hasselt, and Brother John Eme of Zwolle.

In the year 1399, on the Feast of St. Gregory the Pope, Brother Godefried of Kempen, who was born in the diocese of Cologne, was invested by the first Rector. He was a skilful writer and singer, and he wrote one missal for the High Altar, and three Antiphonaries, and likewise illuminated several books. Also he painted and adorned the altars of the church most beautifully with the figures of saints.

CHAPTER VIII

How John Kempen was chosen as the first Prior of Mount St. Agnes

IN the year 1399, after Easter, John of Kempen, one of the community at Windesem, was chosen to be Prior of the House of Mount St. Agnes. By the help of God, he, the first Prior, did govern the affairs of the House, with the many poor inmates, zealously and devoutly for nine years. Also he added to the possessions of the monastery in laudable wise, providing buildings and books and other things needful. He it was that ordered the building of the chief part of the church walls, and he made ready much timber for the finishing of the roof. He began to plant an orchard on the south side of the cloister, and he set forest trees round it on every side. This is that very garden that Gerard Groote, long before, pointed out to the Brothers that they should grow their herbs therein. For a long time wheat was grown, but a great while after herbs were planted.

In the days of the Prior, mountains and hills were made low, and hollow valleys were filled up: then was fulfilled to the letter that which is written in Esaias, a text oft spoken of by the Brothers in the midst of their toil: “Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight and the rough ways plain” ...

It is no easy task to tell with what toil and sweat this mountainous place was turned into a level plane, and this sandy soil made abundantly fruitful. Very heavy and long was the labour of preparing a site for the burial-ground and church, for here the slope was steeper than in other places, and extended over the whole face of the ground. Yet by little and little and by labour done at divers times this hill was taken away and the matter thereof thrown outside the boundary wall into a deep valley toward the north: so

that to the wonder of many scarce a trace of the said hill could be seen. And the Brothers who worked by turns there would say to one another: “True is the word of the Lord which He spake: ‘If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed ye shall say to this mountain, be thou removed from hence hither and it shall be done!’ But since faith without works is dead, we do firmly believe that if we put our hand to this work in the name of the Lord, we shall quickly remove this mountain.” So it was done, not to this mountain only but also to others that stood round about the monastery when the boundaries thereof began to be enlarged and to be surrounded by a wall of stone. Besides this Prior John set up the following needful buildings: namely, a Refectory for the Brothers and another for the Lay Folk, a kitchen and cellar, and cells for guests, also a sacristy for Divine service between the choir and the Chapter House. And he himself was the first among them that laboured, and would carry the hod of mortar, and dig with the spade and throw the earth into the cart. When he had leisure he was instant in reading holy books, and often worked at writing or illuminating. He caused several books to be written for the choir and the library, and because they were poor he appointed certain Brothers to write for sale, as was the custom from old time. This many of the Brothers were zealous to do, but others set themselves manfully to the tasks without.

In the year 1399, Indulgences were granted to the people of Zwolle by the Apostolic See, and Pope Boniface the Ninth granted these to be gained by all that were truly penitent at the Church of St. Michael on the Feast of the Finding of the Holy Cross, and on the Feast of St. Michael.

In this same year, I, Thomas of Kempen, a scholar at Deventer and a native of the diocese of Cologne, came to Zwolle to gain indulgences. Then I went on, glad at heart, to Mount St. Agnes, and was instant to be allowed there to abide, and I was received with mercy. Afterward, on the day before the Feast of St. Barbara the Virgin, came William, son of Henry of Amsterdam, who also, at that time, lived at Deventer with the devout Clerks.

CHAPTER IX

How the Burial-ground at Mount St. Agnes was consecrated

IN the same year, 1399, after the Feast of St. Remigius, the Prior and Brothers of our House took counsel and aid from their friends, and busied themselves about the consecration of the burial-ground, which ceremony had been delayed for a long while because of the hindrances above named. But when they knew that our Lord of Utrecht had returned from the Curia at Rome they came to him in Wollenhoven, where he then lived, and readily obtained their petition through the mediation of their most trusty friends, the noble Sweder of Rechteren and the priest Henry de Ligno.

So that Bishop Frederic, our most kindly lord, delayed not to send to his Suffragan bidding him to come with all speed and consecrate the burial-ground on the Mount, and the Suffragan also when he had read the letter of his Superior was found eager to perform this pious act; and he came without delay with the messengers who had been sent to him, and on the day after the Feast of the Eleven Thousand Virgins, and at about the hour of Vespers, he consecrated the burial-ground that lieth within the cloister of the monastery, the Prior, Brothers, Clerks, and servants of our House being present at the ceremony. When the rite had been performed duly, a gentle rain fell and watered the consecrated ground with the dew of heaven, and all that dwelt thereabout rejoiced with great joy, for that the place had been consecrated by the Bishop, and that the mouths of the adversaries who strove to hinder the foundation and progress of the monastery were evidently stopped.

So when the rite of consecration had been performed by the authority of the Bishop, he went himself on another day to Windesem and there

consecrated the new choir and the four altars.

CHAPTER X

Of the Brothers who were invested by John of Kempen, the first Prior

IN the days of this venerable man our first Prior and Father, seven Clerks and three Converts were invested, and the day and year of their investiture are written below. Likewise he received the profession of Brother Godefried of Kempen who was then about twenty years of age.

In the year of the Lord 1401, on the day after the Dispersion of the Apostles, was invested Brother John Drick of the city of Steenwyck in the diocese of Utrecht. He was before a priest, and Vicar of Steenwyck, and after less than a year of probation he made his profession by licence of the Prior of the Superior House, on the birthday of St. John the Apostle; and he afterward was chosen Procurator.

In the same year, on the Feast day of St. Brixius, Bishop and Confessor, was invested William, son of Henry (who was called William Coman) of Amsterdam in the State of Holland. He was now twenty-three years of age and had lived with the devout Brothers at Deventer, but Florentius Radewin, before his death, sent him to Mount St. Agnes.

In the same year, on the day before the Feast of St. Catherine the Virgin, was invested Brother Frederic, a Convert who was born in Groningen in the State of Frisia, and lived for a long while on Mount St. Agnes with the first founders of the monastery.

In the year of the Lord 1402, on the Vigil of the Nativity of Christ, was invested Brother Gerard, son of Tydeman, who was born in Wesep, a town in Holland: he wrote divers works for the use of the monastery and for sale. In the year of the Lord 1403, on the day of St. Pontianus the Martyr, was

invested Conrad, a Convert; he was a tailor and was born in the Countship of Marck.

In the year of the Lord 1405, on the Festival of the Four Crowned Martyrs, Brother Alardus, a priest, and John Benevolt of Groningen were alike invested: Alardus was forty-six years old and a Frisian by nation; he had been Curate at Pilsum, which was his native place, and was a good and devout man.

In the year of the Lord 1406, on the Feast of Corpus Christi, which fell in that year on the day before the Feast of St. Barnabas, two brothers that were Clerks, and one that was a Convert, were invested. These were Thomas Hemerken of the city of Kempen in the diocese of Cologne, and own brother to John of Kempen the first Prior. The father of these was called John and their mother Gertrude. The other Clerk was called Oetbert Wilde of Zwolle, whose father's name was Henry and his mother's Margaret. The Convert was Arnold Droem of Utrecht who brought great wealth to the monastery and was in charge of the Refectory.

CHAPTER XI

Of the death of Brother Wolfard, Priest in the Monastery of Mount St. Agnes

IN the year of the Lord 1401, on the Feast of the Holy Martyrs John and Paul, Brother Wolfard, son of Matthias, died in the monastery pertaining to our order, which is called the House of the Blessed Virgin in the Wood, and lieth near Northorn. He came from Medenblic, a town in Holland, and was one of the four first Brothers of our House. He was a man of great stature and grave deportment, eloquent in discourse, and his hoary head was comely to look upon. He took part in the labours of the younger Brothers, and would perform lowly tasks, such as washing the trenchers, digging the ground, carrying stones, or collecting wood. It was his wont to come early into the choir, to be alert in watching, enduring in fasting, careful in celebrating the Mass, and devout in prayer. Once he was asked by a Religious what he had eaten during Advent, and whether he had had eggs from time to time; and he made answer: “Blessed be God, throughout Advent I have seldom taken eggs or fish, but I have eaten pulse only and have kept the fast in great contentment.”

So when by the ordinance of God the end of his life was at hand, and the time when his good deeds should receive a better crown, he made a most edifying end after the manner and order following:

At that time and in this year there was a notable pestilence in our House of the Blessed Virgin in the Wood, whereof the Prior and many Brothers died, and the one priest who survived, Brother John of Groninghen, a weakly and feeble man, was left desolate save for the presence of one novice, Brother Honestus. But our Brother Wolfard, hearing of the death of these Brothers, and of the grief of them that were left desolate, was greatly

moved with compassion for this House. One day, therefore, when girt for labour, he said in a tone of pity to me, as I stood by him, “Who could deserve to have his portion with these good Brothers of Northorn, and to earn an end like theirs?” For he had known divers of these Brothers, and the place where they dwelt, and he loved their holy company. And as he was telling me many good things concerning them, Brother Arnold, a Convert from Northorn, entered in at the gate of our monastery to ask for one of our priests and when Brother Wolfard saw him coming he ran joyfully towards him and embraced him. But hearing the cause of his coming, he said that he himself was ready to go with him if it were pleasing to the Prior, and his obedience should permit. And Arnold, seeing his readiness to come, rejoiced thereat, and said: “Most beloved Brother, how good would it be that thou shouldest do so.” Then the Brothers were called together and considered who should be sent to succour those Brothers in their strait, and they determined upon Brother Wolfard, who was of fitting character and age, and he, being moved by charity, assented to their resolution. On the next day at sunrise, he set forth to Northorn with Brother Arnold, being ready to lay down his life for the Brothers after the example of Christ, that he might save it everlastingly. So he said farewell to the Brothers of Mount St. Agnes, who wept at his departure, and left the monastery never to return thither; but he knew not how soon he should be removed to a Higher Mount. In thus leaving the place and the Brothers he overcame his natural man and fulfilled the law of charity, following, in his death, the example of Christ. Therefore he entered into the Monastery of Mary, Mother of Christ, which is in the Wood, and within a few days he there made an end of his life, and was buried by the Brothers of the House aforesaid. Our Brother Egbert hath told me that long ago Gerard Groote had said to our brother: “Wolfard, thou shalt know two conversions,” for in the days of Master Gerard, Wolfard had begun to be well disposed to the religious life, but afterward he was turned away to the world: yet after many years, by the grace of God, it came about that he was again pricked to the heart, and, leaving his pastoral charge, he changed his worldly life, and was among the first of the Brothers to take the religious habit, and he thus ended his life with a happy death struggle.

CHAPTER XII

How Brother William Vorniken was chosen to be the second Prior in the House of Mount St. Agnes

IN the year of the Lord 1408, on the Vigil of Ascension Day, Brother William Vorniken, from the Monastery at Windesem, was chosen to be Prior of Mount St. Agnes. He was the second Prior of our House, which he ruled for seventeen years, being a lover of poverty and discipline. After that he was taken away from us he was promoted to the Superior House at Windesem, and became Father General of all our Order. He it was who looked to the roofing of the church, the making of new stalls in the choir, and the provision of fair vestments to be worn by priests and servers on festivals. Also he enlarged the borders of the monastery, and surrounded the whole with a wall of stone; he built a new dwelling for the husbandmen and placed a byre for cattle near the gate, likewise in the year of his departure he began to make a mill and to build a brewery. In several places he planted trees of divers kinds, of which some were fruit trees; and he made smooth the slopes of the mountain, which for the most part still remained steep, and this he did by carrying away the sandy soil.

He ordered the altars to be beautified with pictures, and good store of books to be written for the choir and the library. Yet in the midst of all these things poverty and simplicity were dear to him, and with his own hand he illuminated many books. He took divers Lay Brothers to dwell with him, for he saw with the eye of charity that they would earn the reward of eternal life by faithfully cleaving to their holy labours, and living the common life

under obedience. Some of these he received as Donates, others he invested with the habit of Converts.

During the years that he was Prior he invested fourteen Clerks, whose names, with the days of their investiture, are written hereafter.

In the year 1408, on the Feast of St. Michael the Archangel, was invested Brother Nicholas Creyenschot, a native of the town of Kampen, a youth in years but upright in character.

In the year 1410, on the Feast of All Saints, two Brothers were invested together, namely, Wermbold, a priest of Kampen and kinsman to John of Ummen, and Gerard Ae of Utrecht.

In the year 1411, on the Vigil of the Nativity, three Brothers were invested together, namely, John the son of Gerard, John Bowman, and Gerard son of Wolter, a Convert; all these came from Zwolle. In the year 1413, on the Feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin, was invested Brother John of Lent, a town one mile from Zwolle. In the year 1418, on the Vigil of the Nativity, three Brothers were invested together, namely, Rudolph of Oetmersen in Twenthe, Otto Lyman of Goch in Geldria, and Henry the son of James of Zwolle.

In the year 1421, on the Vigil of the Nativity, two Brothers were invested: namely, Henry, son of William, of Deventer, and Deric Veneman of Zwolle.

In the year 1423, on Easter Eve, two Converts were invested, namely, Gerard ten Mollen of Zwolle, and Gerard Hombolt of Utrecht.

In the year of the Lord 1424, on the Feast of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, these three Brothers were invested: John Lap of the town of Neerden in Holland, Christian Anversteghe of Campen, and Helmic Braem of Herderwijck in the State of Geldria.

CHAPTER XIII

Of the death of Brother Nicholas Kreyenschot

IN the year 1410, on the Feast of St. Barnabas the Apostle, Nicholas Kreyenschot died just after sunset. He was a youth of good disposition, and sprang from a notable family of the town of Kampen. He was about twenty-three years of age, for God dealt pitifully with him so that his short span of life fulfilled the task of many years, and he escaped longer struggles in this present life; for eight months and ten days after his profession he left dwelling in this present world and departed to the other. The virtue of obedience shone brightly in him, as was seemly in a good youth. Who should say, "Brother, come hither," and Nicholas would not come straightway, or "Begone," and he did not straightway depart? Moreover, a good return came to the monastery through his means. It happened in a time that he upset and broke a jar, and so grieved was he at this mischance and loss, that he wept bitterly. Once also he made ready a sharp rod, and came to the sub-Prior, saying: "I entreat thee, Father, for God's sake, to inflict a sharp discipline upon me, for I do often transgress, nor do I make any progress." He was buried in the eastern part of the cloister near the wall of the church and beneath the steps of our dormitory.

CHAPTER XIV

Of the consecration of our Church and of four Altars in the House of Mount St. Agnes

IN the year 1412, on the 8th day of the month of April, being the Friday after Easter, our church was consecrated, being dedicated in honour of St. Agnes the Virgin and Martyr of Christ. The rite was performed by Matthias of Biduane, the Suffragan of our Lord and Reverend Father in Christ, Frederic de Blanckenheim, Bishop of Utrecht. Many religious persons and priests were present thereat, namely, the Prior of Windesem, the Prior of Belheem, Conrad Hengel and John of Haarlem, who were priests at Zwolle. Many other honourable persons also, both men and women, young and old, men of the town and men of the country, came together to this dedication. There was great joy in the hearts of all, and a general license to enter the monastery was given to strangers, as our statutes allow to be done on that day only. So when the consecration had been solemnly performed, the Bishop came forward in his mitre to consecrate the four altars. First he dedicated the High Altar in the Choir in honour of the Holy Trinity, the Blessed Mother of God, St. Agnes the Virgin, and the Apostles of Christ, and he sang Mass in solemn wise for the dedication of the church and altar.

Then going out of the Choir into the northern aisle of the church, he dedicated the Altar in the greater chapel in honour of the Holy Cross and the Blessed Martyrs, and afterwards the Altar which is in the midst of the church on the left of the Choir in honour of the Blessed Mary ever Virgin, and of St. Augustine the Bishop, who is Father of our Order.

Lastly, he dedicated the Altar on the south side of the Choir in honour of the most Blessed Mary Magdalene, St. Catherine, St. Cecilia, and the Eleven Thousand Virgins.

This done, masses were celebrated at the several altars, and the Host of Salvation was offered up in all reverence to God. But after midday, the Brothers being gathered together, he consecrated the burial-ground for the interment of the dead outside the church and on the western and southern side thereof.

On that day he granted Indulgences for forty days to them that were there present, and a like grace to all the benefactors of the church and all that visited the altars, as was set forth clearly in the Bishop's letter concerning the consecration of the church. In this same church there still stand the two altars that were consecrated in Westerhof at the first foundation of the House in that place; for these, by consent of the Bishop of Utrecht, were transferred to this church after the return of the Brothers from Westerhof. One of these was consecrated in honour of St. John the Baptist and the Blessed Apostles St. Peter and St. Paul; this doth stand on the south side of the church. The other was dedicated in honour of St. James and St. John the Apostles.

The Sunday after the Feast of the Blessed Gallus the Abbot (which is in the month of October), was appointed to be kept in every year as the anniversary of the dedication of this church and the several altars therein; and on this day also is kept the Dedication Festival of the House of the Blessed Virgin in Windesem and of the Convent of Nuns at Diepenveen, to the glory and honour of the most Blessed Trinity.

In the same year, when their General Chapter was held at Windesem, the venerable Fathers of the Canons Regular in Brabant came thereto, and were accepted and united to our Fraternity, together with the Houses belonging to them.

In this year from the Feast of Pentecost onward the Canonical Hours were sung in our church after the monastic manner.

CHAPTER XV

Of the death of the beloved Father John Ummen, the first Founder of the Monastery of Mount St. Agnes

IN the year 1420, in the evening of the 1st day of September, the Feast of St. Ægidius the Abbot, died that holy and faithful servant of Christ, John Regheland, formerly a most beloved disciple of Gerard Groote, whose discourses he used to hear. He was born of honest parents, and for several years was educated in Zwolle; but while he was yet a youth he was diseased in the eyes, and God allowed him to fall into darkness, and he continued blind to the end of his life; but yet the less he could see the outer world, the more brightly did the grace of God illumine him inwardly. His mother, whose name was Regheland, was devoted to God, and often went on long journeys to visit the shrines of Saints in company with her blind son, whom she would lead by the hand, taking him with her to hear sermons in church, and leading him onward to every good thing.

So when the venerable Master, Gerard Groote, was preaching in Zwolle, and through God's inspiration was bringing compunction to many, the Lord did open the heart of this His servant also, and did inflame him, wherefore he began to love Gerard much, and often sought to be instructed by the doctrine of so great a man. For this cause he left wandering about the world and sought to serve God in quietness, also he exhorted all that came to him to despise earthly desires, and take hold on that new life in Christ which Gerard taught by his holy manner of living.

Therefore he took to him certain men that were well disposed; and with them he, began to live the Common Life in Zwolle, but afterward they took

up their abode upon Mount Nemel (which is now called Mount St. Agnes), because they wished to dwell outside the tumult of the world. Here they gathered a larger company, the which he governed for many years with faithful devotion, assisted by divers helpers, until the monastery was founded, for he did not fear the many hindrances that met him. But at length when the monastery was builded, and a Prior instituted in the canonical manner, John, being filled with brotherly love, and led by a yet fuller zeal for souls, took with him certain laymen of ripe age and began to form a new congregation in honour of the Holy Trinity, in the field of St. John, near Vollenhoe, which congregation, by the favour of God, he did enlarge greatly. And when in the process of time the number of the Brothers was multiplied, he and many others took the habit of the Tertiaries, and he continued to his life's end to be the humble servant of the Brothers and their first Rector. He was one of the first and original disciples of Gerard Groote, and had many spiritual discourses with him, for it was from Gerard that he learned the way of an holy life, and he submitted himself and his little ones fully to Gerard's counsel and discretion. Being prevented in due season by God's grace, Father John was devout, and is worthy of remembrance, for that going on day by day he reached forward continually to the things that are before, being a notable lover of poverty, one that kept lowliness and loved sobriety. He was the very beauty of purity, a pattern of simplicity, a strong upholder of discipline, an enemy of sin, a light of virtue, an ensample of devotion, strong in faith, long suffering in hope, prodigal in charity, and one that did convert many from the vanity of the world. A few things concerning him are written in the beginning of this book.

So being wearied by his many years, when the day of his release from captivity was nigh, and he was dwelling in the house of the Sisters at Almelo, he fell sick; and having fulfilled seventy years of life, he fell asleep in the Lord and was buried in the chapel of the Sisterhood there. After his happy departure, John of Resa, a devout priest, was chosen as the second minister of the House of St. John, and he sought and obtained for that House certain privileges that were needful, and also the consecration of the burial-ground, which things were granted by the Venerable Frederic, Lord Bishop of Utrecht. After him Christian, a native of Zeeland, and one that had made his profession, was chosen as priest to that House, and was the third to administer and rule the same.

CHAPTER XVI

Of the pestilence that afflicted mankind, and how some of our Brothers died in this plague

IN the year 1421 there was a notable pestilence in Deventer, Zwolle, Kampen, and the neighbouring towns, and during the three months of summer much people of the land were slain thereby. In the same year, after the Feast of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist, the Cross was preached against the heretics of Prague, who stirred up a grievous persecution against Holy Church, the clergy, and the Christian people; and led away many faithful persons by threatenings and deceits: likewise they destroyed monasteries and churches, and put many persons to a cruel death. In the same year in the month of September the disease laid hold on certain of our household, for the pestilence did mightily increase, and on the Octave of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary, after High Mass, a Lay Brother named Nicholas died. He was born in Drenthe, and had been our miller, a man of good reputation and life, and well beloved by all that were in the House.

On the Feast of St. Lambert, Bishop and Martyr, and about the hour of Vespers, died our Brother Oetbert Wilde, a fervent and devout priest. The Brothers were with him when he died, and they offered up prayers after the accustomed manner. He was in the thirty-eighth year of his age, and the fifteenth after his profession: he came from Zwolle, where he was born of very honest parents, and he loved our patroness St. Agnes the Virgin with a special devotion. In the beginning he suffered many weaknesses and temptations, but afterward, by the help of God, he was changed into another man, mightily uplifted from pusillanimity of spirit, and endowed with much grace of devotion. He died happily after a good struggle, and on the next

day his body was buried next to Brother Nicholas Kreyenschot on the eastern side of the cloister, and Mass and prayers were said for him.

On the Feast of St. Michael, after Vespers had been said, Nicholas, son of Peter, departed this life. He was a Donate of our House, and a carpenter, being a man of great stature and mighty strength, and he had lived for more than twenty years in the House of Mount St. Agnes. He came from Monekedam in Holland, and having lived with us from the very beginning of the monastery, he left a good memorial of his skill and industry in his craft in the building of the church, and the new stalls for the Brothers in the choir. His body was laid in the burial-ground of the Laics, toward the south part and near the path.

On the day of St. Jerome the Priest, at about the time when the midday meal was ended, died Riquin of Urdinghen, a Donate of our House who attended the sick. He departed after a brief agony, while Litanies were sung round his death-bed: his native place was in the diocese of Cologne, and during the twenty-five years that he lived in the House on the Mount he never visited his friends, nor saw his native land once he had departed from her. He loved the Blessed Virgin with singleness of heart, and on the seventh day of the week he abstained from one portion of pottage out of devotion to her. In these three desires he was heard of the Lord before his death, namely, to die on an high day, and amid the Brothers—for he greatly loved them—and to have a short death struggle; which things were so brought to pass by our good Lord even as he had desired them out of his good and simple heart.

On the Feast Day of St. Luke the Evangelist, at about the fifth hour of the morning, died Adam of Herderwijck, a Donate of our House, who had sojourned in this place for twenty years. He submitted himself to divers toils and discommodities by his devotion and faithfulness to the business of the House; he was pitiful to the poor, kindly to the afflicted, and in this time of stress he ministered with care and diligence to the Brothers that were sick. His body was laid in the burying ground of the Laics near the other Donates, and after his burial the pestilence was stayed, for God had pity on us, and some that had been smitten by this stroke grew whole of their disease.

In this year, after the Feast of All Saints, Brother Gerard Ae, once an inmate of the House on the Mount, died in Frisia in the Convent of the

Nuns at Berghen.

In the same year, on the Feast of St. Lucia the Virgin, Peter Valkenburrigh the Priest departed this life. He had lived an humble life for a long while with the Brothers in the Field of St. John near Vollenhoe, and he desired to be buried upon Mount St. Agnes, where he had dwelt in former days, with the first Brothers of the House; for they of the Field of St. John had not as yet a consecrated burying ground; so he was laid to rest on the eastern side of ours next to Winald the Priest, who was once chaplain to our Lord Frederic, Bishop of Utrecht, and a friend to the Brothers on the Mount.

CHAPTER XVII

Of the death of William, son of Seger, a Priest in Hasselt

IN the year of the Lord 1422, on the Vigil of Ascension Day, which was the day following the Feast of St. Potentiana, died that devout priest, William, son of Seger, the Confessor of the Sisters of the Third Order at Hasselt. He was born in Zwolle, and was buried, as he had long desired, on the eastern side of the precinct before the Prior's Cell. There were present at his burial these venerable men, namely, Father Wessel, first Superior of Kleerwater, near Hattem, Father John Haerlem, Confessor of the Sisters at Zwolle, Father Gerard Trecht, and Father Stephen Mulart, who were priests in Hasselt. Also many other honourable men, and friends of the said William, came together to his burial from the aforesaid towns, and the Prior of the House recited the burial office with faithful devotion in presence of the Brothers.

After his death Father Gerard Trecht was called by the Fathers of our Order to rule over the aforesaid Sisters in the room of the departed Brother.

In the same year, during the days of Pentecost, peace was established between the men of Utrecht and Holland, and those of Geldria, for during a whole year they had been at grievous enmity, and many deeds of rapine, murder, and arson had been wrought in evil wise on both sides.

In the month of September, on the day before the Feast of S. S. Cosmas and Damianus, Brother John Pric, a priest and inmate of the House of Mount St. Agnes, died in Thabor in Frisia. He was born in the town of Steenwyck, and had been Vicar of the Church of St. Clement in that place, but after several years, at the request of the Prior at Thabor, he dwelt for a time with the Brothers of that House, and in the same year many died in the

pestilence, amongst whom he also fell asleep in the Lord, and was buried with the other Brothers in that place on the eastern side of the cloister. This was his motto for the novices: “He that doth not accustom himself to exercises of humility at the beginning of his conversion, and doth not break down his own will, shall seldom become a good Religious.”

In the month of October, on the day of the translation of St. Augustine the Bishop, there died at Zwolle that honourable dame, Mary, the widow of Henry de Haerst, our neighbour. She was truly pious and pitiful towards the needy, and often came humbly to Mount St. Agnes to hear the Holy Offices. Moreover, she abstained from all wordly adornments in her vesture, and she left a good bequest to our Brotherhood on the Mount, where also she doth lie buried in the church in the same tomb with Bartold her son.

In the year 1423 there was such mighty cold and frost that endured from Epiphany even to the Feast of St. Peter’s Chair at Antioch, that the hardness of the frost brought great masses of ice across the waters. Wherefore at the beginning of March, when the snow and ice melted suddenly in the heat of the sun, a great flood of waters followed, and the dykes were burst by the rushing thereof, so that much of the corn land was overflowed, and the seeds perished.

In the summer of the same year the boundary wall round our monastery was finished even from the south to the western side, and a new gate was made.

In this same year, on Easter Eve, two Converts were invested, namely, Brother Gerard ten Mollen, and Brother Gerard Hombolt, as is recorded above.

CHAPTER XVIII

Of the death of our most reverend Lord Frederic, Bishop of Utrecht

IN the year of the Lord 1423, on the Feast Day of S. Dionysius, Bishop and Martyr, which is the ninth day of October, that most reverend and renowned Lord Frederic of Blankenheim, the illustrious Bishop of Utrecht, went away out of the light of this world, being about eighty years of age.

He ruled the diocese of Utrecht strenuously and in honourable wise during thirty years, for the grace of God Almighty succoured him: his power was increased by many victories, and he gave the Church peace, his country safety, and his people tranquillity before his death. This is he that was a potentate of renown, a pillar of the priesthood, a guiding star to Clerks, a father to the Religious, a friend to all devout persons, a defender of the orphan, an avenger upon the unjust.

This is he that was the glory of rulers, the delight of subjects, that upheld dignity among the aged, and uprightness amongst the young, he was a pinnacle of learning, the ornament of the wise; he gave weapons to the warriors and a shield to them that strove: he inspired terror in his foes, and courage in his people; he was an ornament to the nobles, an honour to princes, a glory to the great ones of the land. Who could tell his praises in worthy wise, for in his days all was well ordered in the land of Utrecht! Prelates were honest, and priests pious in the worship of God; the religious were devout, the virgins were chaste, the people were fervent in the faith, judges were firm, and wealth grew abundantly in the cities. In these days also, schools for learning flourished, especially at Deventer and Zwolle, and a vast multitude of learners came together from divers states and regions, both near and afar off. And because the Bishop feared God, honoured Holy

Church, and loved and defended all that served the Lord, therefore the Majesty on High protected him from the enemies that were round about, making rebellious nations subject to him, especially those Frisians who had invaded his territories. Moreover, God did make his days illustrious by many marvellous deeds, so that an age of gold seemed to have been granted to his land of Utrecht. But this did appear more evidently after the Bishop's death, when a schism—exceeding lawless and long enduring—arose and increased among Clerks and people alike. And this the reverend Bishop feared should come about, for he was a prudent man and a learned; moreover, he knew the manners of the cities and the seditious ways of some of the nobles whose insolence he had been able to restrain and subdue with difficulty, and the exercise of great valour. “After my death,” said he, “they will know that they have had a good lord, for they all wish to be masters, and to have none set over them, wherefore it shall be ill with them.” And he prophesied truly, for the whole land of Utrecht suffered grievous loss for her sedition, and shall long mourn the same, as will be shown briefly in the proper place.

So this illustrious ruler died in his castle that is called Horst, not far from Utrecht, and his body was brought by a seemly train of followers to the church at Utrecht where his predecessors were buried, and there in company with the other bishops in an honoured tomb upon the right side of the choir he doth rest in peace.

CHAPTER XIX

Of the death of Brother John Vos of Huesden, who was the second Prior at Windesem

IN the year of the Lord 1424, on the Saturday following the Feast of St. Andrew, being the second of December, the venerable Father John Huesden, who was the second Prior of Windesem, died in the sixty-first year of his age. He had been a disciple of Master Gerard Groote and Father Florentius, Vicar of Deventer, and on the Feast of St. Mary Magdalene, in the year following the investiture of the first Brothers, he himself was invested there together with Henry Balveren. A short time after Brother Werner, the first Prior, was absolved from his office, this John Huesden was chosen the second Prior of the House, being then in the twenty-eighth year of his age. By the help of God he continued as Prior for thirty-three years and ruled the House in a laudable manner: also he was of much profit to the whole Order, being a most comfortable and kindly Father to all the devout Brothers and Sisters that were in the whole Diocese, for he was charitably disposed to all alike. He ordered the writing of many books for the monastery, being a fervent lover of the holy writings, and was specially devoted to our Father Saint Augustine, a store of whose books he collected diligently. He was also at Constance in the days of the General Council, whither he went in company with John Wale, the venerable Prior of Zwolle, and the cardinals and other prelates received them both kindly and with reverence.

Now it came to pass a few days before his death, and within the Octave of St. Martin the Bishop, that two Brothers came from Mount St. Agnes to Windesem to commune with the Prior. And one of them had a dream after this wise, which vision did foretell the Prior's death; for he saw the spirits

gathered together in Heaven and hastening as if to the death-bed of some one, and straightway he heard a bell toll as if for the passing of a dying man, and the sound hereof aroused him, and he awoke. So rising from his bed and desiring to go to see what had happened, he perceived no man, for it was before the fifth hour in the morning, and the Brothers were yet asleep. So, returning to himself, he kept silence, and the thought came to him that our Father the Prior should soon depart hence. Yet he told naught of this vision to any that were in the House, but to a certain Clerk that was coming from Brabant and journeying in his company he said privately: "Tell Hermann Scutken, who sojourneth at Thenen, to come quickly if he would speak with our Father at Windesem, for if the vision that one hath seen this night is true, I wot that he shall not long abide here." So when fifteen days were passed this Reverend Father died on the day aforesaid after High Mass, and before the midday meal the Mass of the dead was sung for him, and his body was buried in the choir before the step of the sanctuary.

On the Vigil of the Epiphany after the death of this venerable Father, Brother Gerard Naeldwije, the Procurator of the House, was chosen to be Prior; but he was greatly grieved thereat, and after a long while he consented, though against his will. Being lowly and gentle he might not bear the honour and burden of this place, and he sought earnestly with many prayers to be relieved from the care of so great a charge, and when the next General Chapter was held he sought to be absolved from his office of Prior, which petition was granted to him. So after he had been absolved, and when the Fathers were still gathered together, Brother William Vorniken, the Prior of Mount St. Agnes, was chosen by the same General Chapter to be Prior of the Superior House. And when he knew of his election he too was stricken with dismay, for he was afraid of the burden, which is indeed a thing to fear. So he wept abundantly, saying again and again that he was unworthy, and striving mightily against this thing in every manner, yet was he obliged to obey and to take upon himself for Christ's sake the yoke of so great a burden, being compelled thereto by his obedience and the determination of the more part. Therefore, at length, he consented, and after weeping bitterly he was confirmed and inducted into the office, and all that were in the House gave thanks to God and were glad;

but the House of Mount St. Agnes was saddened above measure and wept when her faithful Pastor was taken from her, for she knew none like to him.

CHAPTER XX

How Brother Theodoric of Kleef was chosen to be the third Prior of the House on the Mount

IN the year of the Lord 1425, the House of Mount St. Agnes bereft of her Pastor (who had been chosen for and translated to the Superior House) was instant to provide for herself another suitable ruler in accordance with the canons. Wherefore the Brothers were gathered together, and on the Saturday after Pentecost the Mass of the Holy Spirit was celebrated after the monastic manner, and all the members of the Chapter came together to the Chapter House. When the opinion of each had been heard, Brother Theodoric of Kleef, our Sub-Prior, was chosen, and those venerable Fathers, the Prior of Windesem and the Prior of the House of the Blessed Virgin, near Northorn, took part in this election, and confirmed the same as an holy act by the authority committed to them.

Brother Theodoric was one of the elder Brothers of this same House, and had been among those that were first invested: he had a long training in the good life, and he wrote summer and winter Homilies together with certain other books.

After his election as Father and third Prior of our House, many evils befel in the diocese of Utrecht, which same did mightily afflict our House and all the devout in the land. This was by reason of a schism between Sueder of Culenborgh, who was confirmed as Bishop of the diocese, and the noble Rodolph of Diepholt, and the long continued strife between these two did disturb many Clerks and citizens of the land.

In the same year, on the Feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and after Compline, died our Brother Conrad, a Convert. He was the tailor, and was born in Scyrebeke in the Countship of Marck, and had lived at Deventer under Florentius, which devout Father sent him to Mount St. Agnes when he had learned the tailor's art. He lived devoutly and humbly with us for many years, making, cleaning, and mending the raiment of the Brothers, but toward the end of his life it was his chief delight to think that he had often cleansed their clothing, for he hoped by his labours in this regard to have cleansed also the stains of his own sins. He was a man right pure and modest, and one that loved poverty and simplicity, and he ardently longed to be released and to be with Christ Jesus and Mary, Whom he often called upon by name at the last: moreover, it was given him to die a peaceful and an holy death on this day of Her Festival, and his body was laid in the burying ground within the cloister of the monastery, hard by the northern gate, toward the wall of the eastern building. In the same year Sueder of Culenborgh was confirmed Bishop of Utrecht by the authority of the Apostolic See, and he was accepted by the people of Utrecht, and of certain other towns, but by the States of Overysse he was not received. Wherefore these States were placed under an Interdict, and a great controversy arose among Clerks and people, for some observed the Interdict, but the chief ones of the States with those that clave to them, clamoured against it.

Alas! Holy God! on the day before the Feast of St. Lambert we ceased from our singing by reason of the Interdict that was published against us! For this cause the nobles of the land and many of the vulgar had indignation against us and other Religious, and we suffered many insults, and at last we were driven to go forth from our country and our monasteries in order to observe the Interdict.

In the same year, on the holy day of Christ's Nativity, were invested two Clerks that had been Probationers a long while, and also one Convert named James Cluit of Kampen who had studied for some time at Deventer under John of Jülich, the famous and devout Rector. The Clerks were Brother Gerard Smullinc of Kleef, who had attended the school at Zwolle under Master John Cele, the excellent Rector with whom he dwelt for some space as a fellow commoner: and Brother James Ae, a Convert from Utrecht, and kinsman to Brother William Vorniken who was once our Prior.

CHAPTER XXI

Of the death of Brother Egbert formerly Sub-Prior at the House on the Mount

IN the year of the Lord 1427, on the day after the Feast of St. Ægidius the Abbot, and after the third hour of the night, Brother Egbert of Linghen died at Diepenveen in the House of the Sisters of our Order. He was Rector and Confessor of that House, and was buried in the church there, outside the choir and between the two chancels, the Prior of Windesem being present at his burial.

This Brother was born in the town of Ummen and baptised in the church of St. Bridget: but when his parents removed to Zwolle, he being a youth of good disposition began to attend the school under Master John Cele, and earnestly to profit thereby. And when he heard the honourable reputation of the House on the Mount he came thither eagerly: now the elder John Ummen then ruled over it, and his wholesome exhortations touched Egbert to his good, so being now sufficiently advanced in learning he left his parents, and in humility and devotion joined himself to these Brothers—the poor little ones of Christ. Afterward he was promoted to the Priesthood in this same House, and since the grace of devotion grew in him, in a short time he, with two others, took the Religious habit. These three were the first to take it, and Egbert the first amongst them. Also he was for a time Sub-Prior of our House on the Mount, being a man of good heart, eloquent in word, diligent in writing, a comforter of them that sorrowed, quick to forgive injuries, and one that did rejoice with all his heart at the progress of others. He adorned many of the chant books in the choir with beautiful illuminations, and also divers books for our library, and sometimes those that were written for sale. He loved our House on Mount St. Agnes above

all places that are on the earth, and he laboured right faithfully for the building thereof. Moreover, when his parents were dead, he, their only son, received all their goods as their lawful heir; and these were given for the common use of the Brothers who had heretofore lived in great lack. Wherefore year by year memorial is made of him and his parents in the monastery for these benefits, as is justly due.

CHAPTER XXII

How our Brothers and other Religious were driven from the land by reason of the Interdict

IN the year of the Lord 1429, the strife between them that followed Sueder and them that clave to Rodolph—who had been chosen to be Bishop—still continued, and heavy threats were made against the Regulars in that they obeyed the letter of the Apostolic See and the commandments of Sueder, Bishop of Utrecht. And since they would not consent to the appeal of Rodolph, nor maintain his cause, they were driven either to begin again to sing the services of the church or to depart from the country, they and all their company.

Then did the Priors take counsel with their congregations, and they chose rather to give place to the people that were enraged against them, and to be exiles for justice' sake than to consent to such commandments to the scandal of all the devout, for these had already gone away from a great part of the country, leaving their own houses and their native land.

Therefore, when this grievous choice was made known before the Fathers and Brothers of our House, there was but one opinion amongst all, namely, that they must prepare to sojourn in a strange land and so keep obedience to the Apostolic See, but that they should leave in the monastery certain of their household that were Lay Brothers, Converts and Donates, who might keep the House. Thus were the Brothers driven forth, and they departed publicly before sunset on the Feast of St. Barnabas the Apostle. Moreover the Brothers of Windesem with their household went forth toward Northorn, and they of Bethlehem in Zwolle went over the Yssel to the

district of Geldria. But the Brothers of Mount St. Agnes abode at Hasselt for the first night, and on the next day they took ship for Frisia meaning to go to their Brothers at Lunenkerck, to help and comfort that House which they had begun to reform. And by the help of God, while many of our Brothers sojourned there, the House soon came to be well ordered. There were together in the hired ship in which they crossed over twenty-four of our household, both Clerks and Lay Brothers, and these abode three years in Lunenkerck for the name of Christ and the Church of God; and the exile from their own land, which they took patiently, bore notable fruit.

These are the names of our Brothers and the others of our household, both Clerks and Laics, who were driven from the land of Utrecht and from our monastery for their obedience in the matter of the Interdict which they observed for more than a year by command of the Apostolic See.

First our venerable Father the Prior, who was called Brother Theodoric of Kleef; the second was Brother Thomas of Kempen, the Sub-Prior; the third, Brother John Ummen, who was stricken in years and weak; the fourth, Brother Gerard Wesep; the fifth, Brother John Benevolt; the sixth, Brother Wermbold Staelwijc; the seventh, Brother John Bouman; the eighth, Brother Henry Cremer; the ninth, Brother Henry of Deventer; the tenth, Brother Dirk Veneman; the eleventh, Brother Helmick; the twelfth, Brother Christian; the thirteenth, Brother James Cluyt; the fourteenth, Brother Gerard Smullinc; the fifteenth, Brother Cesarius, a Novice; the sixteenth, Brother Goswin, son of Pistor, a Novice.

Likewise there were two Converts, namely, Brother Arnold Droem and Brother James Ae; three Clerks that had not yet received the Religious habit, namely, Hermann Craen, Gosswin ten Velde, and Arnold ten Brincke; two Donates named Gerard Horn bolt and Laurence, and also John Koyte, a guest and familiar friend of our House. All of these were received for the first night as the guests of the Sisters at Hasselt, who showed great charity and humanity towards us, and they lamented and wept bitterly that we were driven out with violence. But since all the Brothers could not find room nor beds wherein to sleep, these Sisters had compassion upon us and brought us their own bedding wherewith they prepared a place for us to sleep in the stable on the hay and straw, and here we all slept commodiously enough. Many of the citizens in Hasselt also had compassion upon us and wept, but certain envious folk that thought ill of us mocked our Brothers and spake

lightly of them, but of these divers did afterward repent. On the second day, when morning came, we hired a small ship and came by way of the sea to Frisia, the land we sought, having taken sustenance by the way; but we used both sails and oars and gat us across not without great hazard for the wind was contrary. Thus we went thither for the name of Christ and to keep obedience to the Holy Roman Church, the which we all desired to obey, and we committed ourselves to God Who showed forth His mercy toward us, and snatching us from the peril of the sea brought us safely to our Brothers in Lunenkerk.

In the year 1430, on the 19th day of December, being the day before the Vigil of St. Thomas the Apostle, died our beloved Brother John, a priest who was born at Kampen. He was third among the first four who received investiture, and he died after midday and was buried on the right side of Brother Oetbert. He wrote in excellent wise the Chants in the books that are for use in the choir, for he was a good singer, and a man of modest character, and showed himself to be able and skilled in divers kinds of work at harvest time and in the building of the House. When we were driven forth he went with the Brothers to Frisia, though he was weak, for he chose rather to share their exile than to abide alone with a few Lay Brothers to keep the House. But afterward he was sent back before the rest, for his sickness compelled us to do this: so having fulfilled thirty-one years in the Religious Life, he fell asleep in the Lord.

In the year 1431, on the Feast of St. Stephen, Pope and Martyr, Brother Goswin Becker died in Lunenkerk. He was in the beginning of the third year after his profession, but was not yet in Holy Orders, and he was buried in the cloister of the monastery there. He was the son of one John Limborgh, otherwise Becker, and was born at Zwolle.

CHAPTER XXIII

Of the return of our Brothers from Frisia to Mount St. Agnes

IN the year of our Lord 1422 (1432), license was granted to members of the Religious Orders, and to devout Priests and Canons, to return to their own places and monasteries which they had left in order to observe the Interdict of our Lord the Pope, but some few were excepted as being suspected of taking part in the sedition. Now the Bishop of Matiskon had been sent as Legate of the Apostolic See to make terms of peace, and to remove the Interdict that had been pronounced to maintain the cause of Sueder as against the noble Rodolph, who had been chosen to be Bishop. Many Prelates and Religious Brothers were gathered together to meet the aforesaid Legate in the town of Viana, and the Fathers of our Religious Order and Devotion, the Priors of Windesem and of Mount St. Agnes together with many others—devout Priests, who had been obedient to the Interdict—entered into Utrecht rejoicing, after holding friendly converse with the Legate. Then the Brothers returned each to his own House bearing with them sheaves of peace, the reward for their long exile which they had endured outside the diocese, and so by little and little they returned to their own monasteries eagerly and with devotion; for some of the Brothers of our House returned on the eve of the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Mary, and some about the Feast of St. Michael, while a few were left in Frisia to minister to the needs and preserve the discipline of the House at Lunenkerck.

Through all things blessed be God who alone doeth great marvels!

CHAPTER XXIV

Of the death of Brother John of Kempen, the first Prior of Mount St. Agnes

IN the same year, on the fourth day of November, at midnight, died Brother John of Kempen, the first Rector and Confessor of the Sisters at Arnheim, being in the sixty-seventh year of his age. He had been Rector or Prior in divers places and Houses that were newly founded, namely, at the Fount of the Blessed Virgin, near Arnheim, where he was the first Rector when that House was founded, and here he invested divers Brothers: afterward he was chosen to be Prior of Mount St. Agnes and ruled the House for nine years: then he was sent to Bommel, and he began the House there with a few Brothers. After this he was chosen to be Prior of the House of the Blessed Mary, near Haerlem, in Holland, over which he ruled for seven years. At another time he was deputed to be the first Rector of the Sisters at Bronope, near Kampen, and at last he ended his life happily in a good old age and in obedience in Bethany, which is by interpretation “the House of Obedience,” and he was buried within the cloister after Vespers. I was with him and I closed his eyes, for I had been sent by the Visitors to bear him company, and I abode with him for a year and two months. After Easter, in this same year, the House of Bethany was incorporated into the General Chapter.

In the year of the Lord 1433, during Lent, three Clerks were invested, namely, Brother Hermann Craen of Kampen, Brother John Zuermont of Utrecht, and Brother Peter Herbolt of Utrecht. In the same year died Sueder of Culenborgh, Bishop of Utrecht, and after his death Pope Eugenius confirmed Rodolph Diepholt, who had been chosen before, to be Bishop of the diocese.

In the year 1434, on the Feast of the Conception of the Glorious Virgin Mary, was invested Brother Bero, a Clerk, of Amsterdam.

In the same year, on July 28th, died Margaret Wilden, a matron of great age and mother of our Brother Oetbert. She was buried in the broad passage at her son's head, and on the northern side of the cloister.

In the year of the Lord 1436, on the Octave of the Feast of St. Stephen, Proto-Martyr, Brother John, the first Convert of our House, died in Beverwijk, near Haerlem. He was a faithful man and prudent in business, wherefore he was sent abroad with Brother Hugo of the same House, and bound by his obedience he accepted the mission.

In the same year, on the Feast of St. Juliana the Virgin, after Lauds, died John Benevolt, a Priest of our House, who was born in Groninghen, a man of great simplicity and innocence; he was buried on the eastern side of the cloister, on the right of Brother John Ummen.

In the same year, on the Feast of the Finding of the Holy Cross, in the first hour after midday, died Brother Alardus, a Priest of Pilsum and a Frisian by nation. He was well stricken in age, being above seventy-six years old, and had lived the Religious Life for thirty years. He was a man of great gentleness, and in the celebration of the Mass careful and devout. He was ever among the first to go into the choir and the Common Refectory of the Brotherhood until his last sickness. It had been his desire to die on this Feast because he had often celebrated it at the Altar of the Holy Cross, and according to his prayer so it was done unto him. He often said to me, "The best dish that is set before me in the Refectory is the Holy Reading, the which I gladly hear: wherefore I do not absent myself willingly lest I should miss the fruit of that Holy Reading during the meal. I delight also in the presence of the Brothers, in that I see the whole congregation there present taking their food under strict discipline." At length he was weighed down with years, and though he could not walk alone, he came leaning upon a staff to the entrance of the choir to hear the Brothers singing; then he took holy water, and bowed the knee toward the High Altar. On the days when he celebrated he often received a special consolation from God Himself.

In the year of the Lord 1438, on the day after the Feast of St. Gregory the Pope, died Brother Rodolph, a Priest from Oetmeshem, who had been Prior of the House of St. Martin the Bishop, in Lunenkerck, in Frisia, near Herlinghen. He had been sick a long while with dropsy, and on the day

aforesaid he breathed forth his soul between the ninth and tenth hours in the morning, and he was buried on the right of Brother Alardus. In the same year, on the Feast of the Annunciation of the Blessed Mary ever Virgin, six Clerks were invested, namely, Brother Henry Becker of Zwolle, Brother John Zandwijn of Rhenen, Brother Ewic, also of Rhenen, Brother Telmann Gravensande of Holland, Brother George of Antwerp, and Brother Arnold, son of Conrad, of Nussia. In the same year there was a great famine in divers parts of the land, and in a short space a mighty pestilence followed; also in that year, on the Vigil of the Nativity of Christ, and after High Mass, died John Eme, a Convert, who was cellarer to our House.

In the year of the Lord 1439, on the Feast of St. Peter ad Vincula, and early in the morning, before the fourth hour, died Wermbold Stolwic of Kampen, who was a Priest before he began the Religious Life. He was often sick of a fever, and being weakened thereby he fell asleep in the Lord, having made a good confession, and was buried after Vespers. He wrote the music in some of the Chant books in the choir.

In the same year, on the Feast of the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary, there was an earthquake in divers places, and in the summer following a great pestilence in divers parts, and many devout Brothers and Sisters departed from this present world.

In the year 1440 the great building on the western side of the monastery was set up, to receive guests and the Lay folk of our household, and the roof thereof was finished in stone on the day before the Feast of our Holy Father Augustine. At this work many of our Brothers laboured long and bravely, while others attended to the choir.

In the same year four brothers died in the pestilence, namely, Brother Arnold Droem, a Convert, Goswin Witte, a Clerk and Oblate, Dirk Mastebroick, a Donate, Hermann Sutor, a Novice. Likewise many of our neighbours in Haerst and Bercmede died of this plague, and by their own desire were buried in our monastery.

In the year of the Lord 1441, on the Feast of St. Petronilla the Virgin, died our beloved Brother Christian of Kampen, the Infirmarius, for he was smitten with the plague. He was very attentive to the sick and plague stricken, to whom he ministered faithfully to the death. On the same day, when noon was hardly past, died John Clotinc, a Lay Brother and Oblate. He was a man very devout, and a pattern for his long service in the brewery

and the mill, and for his frequent prayers. These died on the same day and at the same hour after High Mass when Sext was done, and after Vespers, when the Vigils had been sung, they were buried in peace. After their death, by the mercy of God, the plague in the cloister was stayed.

In the same year and month, but before the aforesaid Brothers, and on the day before the Feast of St. Pancras, died the elder Wermbold, a Donate, who was born in Hasselt.

In the year 1442, on the fourth day of March, which was the third Sunday in Lent, the venerable man, John of Korke, Bishop Suffragan to our Lord of Utrecht, consecrated the burial-ground upon the eastern side of the church, together with the cloister thereof, likewise the passage before the Brothers' Refectory, and that on the western side that goeth from before the cells of the Converts to the entrance of the church. Also on the northern side the ground to bury strangers in, with the whole circuit thereof, but the part in the midst of it had been consecrated aforetime with our church. Moreover, the Bishop granted indulgences for forty days to them that walked devoutly round the burial-ground. Besides these, he consecrated the precious and fair Image of the Blessed Virgin with the Child Jesus, that standeth above the altar which is dedicated in honour of Her and of St. Augustine (this is that altar which is set in the midst of the church before the choir), and he granted forty days' indulgence to them that should recite five Aves devoutly and on bended knees before the said image. Likewise he consecrated another small image of the Blessed Virgin, that is placed before the gate of our monastery, and he granted forty days' indulgence to them that should recite three Aves there devoutly and on bended knees.

In the year of the Lord 1443, on the day of St. Prisca, Virgin and Martyr, and after midday, died our beloved Brother, John Bouman, a Priest, who was once our Procurator. He had been sick for a long while with a quartan fever, whereby his body was wasted, and he finished his life with a happy agony. He was born in Zwolle, and for many years endured labours and divers infirmities, and this saying of Christ was often in his mouth: "In your patience ye shall possess your souls." When I visited him at the end he said to me, "How gladly I would every day go with the Brothers into the choir if I were strong enough God knoweth!" He was full of faith and compassion, and he gladly read and heard of the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ; he had, moreover, a special devotion to the Blessed Mary Magdalene, for he

was born on Her Feast Day, wherefore he often said the Mass for Her Feast, or humbly asked another to say it for him. About a month before his death a certain Brother had this vision after Matins: it seemed to him that the Brothers were singing the Vigil in the choir, and that a corpse was there. And after the Vigil the door of the choir was opened, and certain Lay Brothers of our household came into the choir and stood round the corpse; amongst these were seen two Lay Brothers who were already dead that came to the burial, namely, Brother John Eme and Hermann, son of Wolter (now they had died four years before this time). These, with the rest of the household, went forth as if to follow the corpse going through the gate upon the south side of the choir, and they went in procession to that part of the precinct where our Brothers, who are Priests, are wont to be buried—and straightway the vision disappeared. Then that Brother held his peace and began to think within himself: “It may be that some one of our Brothers shall soon depart out of this world, and we shall sing the solemn Vigils of the dead for him.” And so it came to pass, for when the month was ended, Brother John Bouman died, and the things seen in the vision were fulfilled in due order on his behalf, and he was buried near Brother Christian. He lived in the Order of Regulars for thirty-one years and twenty-six days, and he had friends in Zwolle that were good men and great: moreover, notable increase of goods came to our monastery from him and from his parents.

In the year of the Lord 1444, on the Feast of All Saints, was invested Henry Ruhorst, a Clerk, who was born at Kampen.

In the same year, on the Octave of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Regulars of Haerlem, by the will of all, took upon them the rule of the cloister.

After the Feast of St. Bartholomew, three of our Brothers who were Priests, were sent to found the new House of Roermund.

In the year of the Lord 1445, on the day before the Feast of St. Bernard the Abbot, our beloved Brother Caesarius Coninc died. He was a native of Utrecht, and Prior of Lunenkerc, but he had made his profession at Mount St. Agnes. He went on the concerns of his House to Antwerp, where he fell sick, and having been in a fever for nearly eight days he fell asleep in the Lord, and was buried there in the Convent of the Sisters of our Order. He held the office of Prior for eight years, and he departed from this world in

the forty-sixth year of his age, and many goods came for the use of the monastery from his parents.

In the same year, during Advent and after, a flood of waters overwhelmed many lands and drowned the crops in Betua that pertains to Geldria and Hertzogenbusch.

In the year 1446, on the Feast of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, two Clerks were invested, namely, Brother James Spaen, from Geldria, and Brother Henry, son of Paul of Mechlin in Brabant; the former of these attended the school at Deventer, and had a brother who was a Religious at Northorn: the latter attended the school at Zwolle.

In the same year, on Palm Sunday in the month of April, there was a great tempest, snow, hail, and the breath of the storm, and thunder was heard therewith. In the night of that day the dyke between Wilsen and Kampen was broken down, and the cattle and beasts of burden at Mastebroic were drowned. In Zutphen the tower of the church was set afire by lightning, and the roof was cleft above, and certain persons were wounded, and some were slain by this sudden mischance—in other parts also divers houses were destroyed by fire. In Zwolle, after Mass, a mighty terror fell upon them that were in the church, and the shutters were shaken from the church windows by a lightning stroke. In the same year, on the day following the Feast of St. Odulphus, and at the seventh hour when Compline was done, died Brother Frederic, son of John, a Convert from Groninghen. He was an aged man of about eighty years, and one of the elders amongst them that first dwelt in this place. In many things he was profitable to the Brothers, for he shaved their heads and blooded them and dressed their wounds, and did other faithful service to the sick and the plague stricken; at length, wearied with age and having a good foundation of holy deeds, he fell asleep in the Lord. He came to Mount St. Agnes to serve the Lord in the sixth year after the death of Master Gerard Groote, with the first Brothers that dwelt here, and with those very poor Lay folk, the disciples of Gerard, of whom I have written above. He lived therefore in this place for sixty-six years, reckoning the years of his conversion from the beginning thereof to the year of his death inclusively, and Brother John Kempen, the first Prior of this House, invested him as a Convert on the Feast of St. Katharine the Virgin, in the year of the Lord 1401, he being the third of the Converts then invested.

In the same year, on the Octave of the Holy Trinity, and on the night of the Feast of the Saints Gervase and Protasius, died Brother Arnold, son of Conrad of Nussia, being twenty-six years of age. He had been in the priesthood for one year, and for nearly fifteen days had been sick of a tertian fever, but God had pity on him that in a brief space he fulfilled many years, and by the swiftness of his course escaped the hazardous defilements of the world; now he had finished eight years in the Religious Life.

In the year of the Lord 1447, on the day before the Feast of St. Agnes the Virgin, two Clerks were invested, namely, Everard ter Huet of Zwolle and James Spenghe of Utrecht.

In the same year the Clerks at Albergen, near Oldenzale, received the habit of Holy Religion in the Order of Canons Regular of St. Augustine, and they were invested on the day of the Finding of the Holy Cross.

CHAPTER XXV

How Theodoric of Kleef, third Prior of the House on the Mount laid down his office, and was absolved therefrom

IN the year of the Lord 1447, that venerable Father, Theodor of Kleef, third Prior of our House of Mount St. Agnes the Virgin, coming home from the General Chapter, called the Brothers together, and humbly sought to speak with them so that when the Visitors of the House came he might be absolved from his office of Prior. For twenty-three years he had ruled the House with fatherly care, and he was weary with many labours. He would have made this petition a year before, but that the urgency of divers concerns of the House had hindered him from so doing, and he pleaded the weakness of his age and that his senses were clouded. Hearing these things the elder Brothers spake with the members of the Chapter, and thinking to show mercy toward their beloved Father who had long served them to the best of his power, they gave a kindly hearing and assent to his petition. Wherefore the three eldest amongst them, on behalf of the other Brothers and at their request, came to the Visitors, for they were sitting in a private room to hear the opinion of each one of the Brothers, and on bended knees with their hands clasped they besought them instantly, and with all their hearts, to grant absolution to this Father for that he was infirm and aged; this they said was the time to show him pity, and this was what he desired as he had told to certain of them privately.

The Visitors therefore heard the opinions of all, and finding that the more part of them that were gathered together demanded this thing of set purpose, did piously admonish the Prior that he might yield to the petition of the

Brothers and resign his office out of consideration for his own weakness of body. The good Father hearing this prostrated himself humbly before the Chapter, and returning thanks to the Brothers said that he was ready to resign into the hands of the Prior of the Superior House the burden of that office which he had long borne.

But since the duty of holding visitations at certain other houses had been laid upon them, the Priors of Windesem and Zwolle besought our Brothers that such visitations might be held by the known and former Prior as the Chapter had ordained, and when these were done, then at a convenient season the desire of the Brothers concerning the absolution of the Prior should be fulfilled.

So when the matter of the visitation was finished, the Priors of Amsterdam and of Hoern returned, and coming to our monastery did a second time examine the opinion of the Brothers in private, and they found that the more part were still of one heart, and constant to their opinion that the Prior should be absolved, though some few of the younger Brothers dissented from the rest.

Hearing this the Visitors, by the authority to them committed, absolved the Prior on the day after the Dispersion of the Apostles, thinking thereby to provide for the peace and usefulness of the House. Then in accordance with the statutes of the Chapter they bade the Brothers to keep fast for three days for the election of a new Prior; then they returned toward Holland to their houses, since their own needs compelled them so to do, but they besought the venerable Prior of Windesem to deign to be present in person at the election when the Brothers should choose their Prior. And this was done, the grace of God providing for us, so that the petition of the Brothers, which they had made long since, came to a good issue in the election of a new Prior, for which election they did invoke the Holy Ghost and poured out prayers to God instantly both in public and in private.

CHAPTER XXVI

How Brother Henry of Deventer was chosen to be the fourth Prior of the House of Mount St. Agnes

IN the year of the Lord 1448, on the 20th day of June (July), when the three days' fast was ended, the Brothers came together to sing the Mass of the Holy Spirit on the day before the Feast of St. Praxedes the Virgin; but the Mass of the Blessed Virgin had been said in private because it was the Sabbath. Then after the end of Mass, and when Sext was done, the Brothers went forth from the choir to the Chapter House to choose a new Prior; and the venerable Prior of Windesem, with the Prior of Zwolle, was there present with them, for he had been called and besought to hear the election. So, having held a short conference with the Brothers, and the manner of election being read, the Prior of Windesem exhorted the members of the Chapter to choose a fit person to be Prior following the commandments of God and Canon Law. There were here present twenty-one Brothers that were electors, and two who were far away had written letters wherein they expressed their will. So the Brothers that were electors went away a little space outside the doors of the Chapter House, and the two Priors aforesaid came and stood by the altar in the Chapter House, the door thereof being open, and with them were the three elder Brothers. There they stood to hear the votes of each man separately, for they could be seen by all, but none could hear what was said. Then the votes of each being heard and counted, our Sub-Prior, Brother Henry, son of William of Deventer, was chosen and nominated to be Prior, having the votes of the more part recorded for him on the paper, namely sixteen. Some there were beside that did not choose

him, but of these three Brothers did not vote at this time, and two chose the Procurator, James Cluyt. Then one of the elder Brothers, on behalf of himself and of the more part, besought the Prior of the Superior House to confirm the election, who straightway appointed the next day to be the last for any to oppose. And when none made opposition to the manner of the election, nor said aught against the Brother who was chosen, the Prior elect was called to consent to his election which had been made according to the canons, so that it might be duly confirmed. And he straightway prostrated himself in the midst of the Brothers protesting that he was not sufficient, and he humbly besought to be relieved of this burden, but when he could not gain his purpose, and dared not obstinately to resist, he gave consent in an humble voice, being overcome by the insistence of the Brothers and compelled by his obedience to his superior: and he submitted himself to the ordinance of God for the sake of observing brotherly love and the needful discipline of the cloister. So when he had been confirmed by the Prior of Windesem he was led in to the choir in the presence of all the Brothers, and placed in his stall, and prayers were offered up. After which done all the members of the Chapter straightway went into the House, and following the accustomed manner all the professed Brothers took the vow of obedience to their Father, the new Prior, and after them the Converts, and lastly the Donates did the like. When this was done they spent the day with joy and giving of thanks, and at last their fathers, the Priors of the other houses who had taken part in all that was done, said farewell to them, and the Brothers left the garden and returned to their cells. When the bell rang for Vespers they came together to the choir, and sang the Vespers of St. Mary Magdalene with cheerful voices. After three days the Brothers were called together to the Chapter House, and the Prior proposed that in accordance with the statutes they should choose another Sub-Prior, so on the Feast of St. James the Apostle, before the hour, for Vespers, Brother Thomas of Kempen was nominated and elected after a brief scrutiny. He was one of the elders, being sixty-seven years of age, and in past times had been appointed to this office, and albeit he knew himself to be insufficient and would have made excuse, yet he did submit him humbly to the assembled Brothers, for his obedience bade him so to do; neither did he refuse to undergo toil on their behalf for the love of Christ Jesus, but earnestly besought the prayers

of his comrades and Brothers, for he trusted rather in the grace of God than in himself.

In the same year, during the summer season, the crops were grievously ravaged in divers places by the mice, which ate the corn while it was still growing up and when it was in the blade. Our Lay Brothers, therefore, dug ditches and put in the ground jars filled with water, and such was the craft with which they did this that a vast number of the mice were drowned in these jars, and they slew in divers places many thousands. These creatures had caused great loss to us and our neighbours by ravaging the wheat, the barley, the oats, and the peas, and also the green crops in the fields that were for the fodder of the cattle.

About the beginning of the month of September there was a notable tempest, and a great flood of waters broke in upon us (for the sea had burst his banks), and this did overflow our pasture land and destroyed the grass and the fodder. By this same tempest many ships that had adventured themselves upon the sea were overwhelmed with all their crews.

But herein again the good and merciful God did provide for us, for our fishers took great store of fish by reason of this flood, and these did suffice the Brothers and their guests for food during many days.

In the year of the Lord 1449, on the Feast of St. Bernard the Abbot, we received the precious relics of certain Saints and Martyrs who were companions of Gereon, Duke and Martyr, and of others that were companions of the Eleven Thousand Holy Virgins of Cologne. These did the venerable Abbot of St. Panthalion send to us from the many relics that are in that monastery.

Likewise Egbert Tyveren, a Donat of our House, brought back to us from Cologne, as true relics, certain small fragments that were given to us by the Carthusians, and by the Regular Brothers of our own order in the House of Corpus Domini. The Prior and the Brothers of our House being gathered together in the choir before High Mass brought these relics into the church, carrying the Standard of the Cross and lighted tapers in their hands, and afterward the Prior placed them on the different altars, having enclosed them in reliquaries in seemly wise in honour of the Saints.

In the same year, on December the 16th, our Brother Godefried of Kempen died in Brabant in the House of the Sisters of the Regular Order that is called the Cloister of the Blessed Virgin, near Zevenborren. This

convent was afterward destroyed utterly by fire in the year 14—, and the Sisters were removed to Brussels with great honour by the Duchess of Burgundy.

In the year of the Lord 1450 many faithful servants of Christ went to Rome to gain Indulgences, which our Lord, Pope Nicholas V, by advice of the Cardinals, and moved himself by piety and mercy, had granted by a Bull in the previous year. Then did many Christian folk that sojourned on this holy pilgrimage return whole, but many died by the way, and many in the city of Rome.

In the same year, in Holland, Utrecht, Amersfoort, Zwolle, Kampen, Deventer, Zutphen and many other towns and hamlets, a bubonic plague raged, and many devout persons and religious, as also many worldlings, departed from this present life. In the same year the winter time was very mild, with but little snow and thin ice, but the wind was cold. In Lent, and at the beginning of March, our fishers took great abundance of the fish called smelts, wherewith, during the Fast, our Brothers were fed, and also many poor beggars at our gates.

In the same year the men of Zwolle builded a great and lofty bridge of strong wooden timbers across the River Vecht, not far from our monastery, to serve the necessities of their own folk and the convenience of men that would come thither; the cost thereof was six hundred Rhenish florins.

In the same year, on the Feast of St. John before the Latin Gate, Brother Gerard of Deventer, whose surname was Bredenort, was invested.

In the same year, on the twenty-ninth day of August, died James Oem, Rector of the Sisters at Bronope, near Kampen, who for nine years had exercised a kindly rule over that House. After his death the Prior of Windesem appointed Brother Dirk of Kleef to be Rector and Confessor of this House. He had been formerly Prior of Mount St. Agnes, and was the eldest of the Brothers of that monastery.

In the year 1451, on the Octave of Easter, which was the day before the Feast of the Finding of the Holy Cross, died Dirk Poderen, a servant of our House, a poor man and an aged, being about eighty years old: he had lived with us for twenty years.

In the same year, on the Vigil of the Feast of St. Andrew the Apostle, and at the ninth hour, when Compline had been said, died Brother Gerard, son of Wolter, a Convert who was sixty-eight years of age lacking two months,

and had lived the Religious Life for nearly forty years. The Prior and the Brothers were present with him at his death: he was faithful and earnest in good deeds and words, and he was buried on the western side of the passage with the other Converts.

In the same year a new mill was builded, and finished with much labour and cost, for the greater convenience of our House.

In the same year the House of the Regulars in Cologne which is called “Corpus Christi,” and standeth in the parish of St. Christopher the Martyr, was received into our Chapter. At this time, namely, after the Feast of the Conception of the Blessed Virgin, our Brother, Henry Cremer, was sent to act as Sub-Prior of this House, and Brother Gerard of Kleef went with him to be the Rector.

In the same year there was a grievous pestilence in Cologne, and as is reported by many, twenty-five thousand persons are reckoned to have died thereof.

In the year of the Lord 1451, our most Reverend Lord Nicholas de Chusa, Cardinal with the title of St. Peter in Chains, who was Legate for the land of Germany, came to the diocese of Utrecht, after that he had visited the upper parts of Saxony and the cities and townships of Westphalia. He came likewise to Windesem, where he was received with honour by the Brothers, and held a conference with them, and by the authority of the Apostolic See he granted Indulgences on the occasion of the Jubilee to all that were subject to our General Chapter. When he was asked whether one might go to Rome to gain Indulgences without special license, he replied: “Our Lord the Pope himself hath said, ‘Better is obedience than Indulgences.’ ”

In the year of the Lord 1452, a great and grievous loss befel the city of Amsterdam, a famed and populous city in Holland, for a fire broke forth on the Feast Day of Urban, Pope and Martyr, and the wrath of God went forth in particular against the congregations of religious persons, both men and women; so great was the fire that the more part of the city should seem to have been destroyed, and scarce a third part thereof was saved. Fourteen monasteries are known to have burned almost to the ground, and verily great misery was caused thereby in the sight of all men, such as had not been heard of from very ancient times until that day. Many virgins that had taken the veil, putting aside their maiden modesty, wandered about the city lamenting and begging for hospitality, whereby the hearts of many were

moved to tears. Everything was buried, from the great Church of St. Nicholas to the ancient Convent of the Nuns of our Order inclusively, and in the other direction from the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary to our monastery exclusively, for God in His mercy spared that House that it was unhurt.

In the same year, on the Feast of the Commemoration of St. Paul the Apostle, and after Vespers, our beloved Brother Henry Cremer died at Windesem; on the day following, being the Octave of St. John the Baptist, his body was brought to our House, wherein, through the mercy of God, he had lived for nearly thirty-three years in the Religious habit; this was done that at his life's end he might not lie in a strange land afar from our House, but might be buried according as he desired amongst our Brothers. He was faithful in his labour, in the writing of books, and in his attendance in the choir; and being zealous for discipline he kept a watch over his mouth and loved his cell. Formerly he had been Prior in Rickenberrich in Saxony for nearly eleven years, and afterward for a few years abode in Diepenveen with two others his companions, but he was instant in his petition to return to the Brotherhood, and obtained his desire; after this he was sent to Cologne, but returning thence he died at Windesem and was buried in our House.

In the year of the Lord 1453, a strange pestilence fell upon the men of certain towns and the villages adjacent thereto. This plague befel after the Feast of St. John the Baptist, and was notable by reason of the benumbing of the throat and the pain it caused in the breast and side. At this time many of our Brothers and the Lay folk of our Household who were labouring hard in the fields—for it was harvest—were smitten so grievously by the benumbing of their throats that they could scarce speak or eat. There was a north wind that was very cold at night, but by day turbulent and dry, and many were chilled thereby and fell sick. As a remedy against this, some clothed themselves in stouter garments and abstained from cold food and drink, and these grew well by reason of their abstinence and care to keep themselves from too great cold, for God had pity on them; but some that neglected these matters died after three days, or even two, being weakened by the numbness.

When this disease first broke forth, our Brother Gerard ter Mollen, a Convert, fell sick and received the Unction after Compline on the day of the

Translation of St. Martin the Bishop: in the night following, before the hour for Matins, his sickness grew heavy on him and he died. He was a faithful labourer, ever ready to toil for the common weal, and he was in the sixtieth year of his age, having fulfilled thirty years and three months in the Religious Life: he was buried in the western path at the head of Gerard, son of Wolter.

In the same year, in the month of July, and on the Feast of the Translation of Benedict the Abbot, died Dirk, son of Arnold, a young man who was a Laic and Fellow Commoner, that came from Bericmede: he had received the Sacrament of the Holy Unction, and died after High Mass had begun.

In the same month, on the day following the Feast of St. Margaret the Virgin, when Compline was done, and the Ave Maria had been said, died Henry Diest, a Donat of our House: he was nearly forty-eight years of age and had fulfilled thirty years in this House.

In the same month, on the day following the Feast of Alexius the Confessor, Dirk Struve, a Laic and Fellow Commoner, died after Compline, having received the Holy Rite of Extreme Unction. He had lived long in the House, and on the day following when the first Mass had been said he was laid in the burying ground of the Lay Brothers.

After him, and on the night before the Feast of St. Mary Magdalene, before Matins, died Everard Ens of Campen, a good and faithful Laic and Fellow Commoner, who had lived with us for fifteen years.

In the same year, in the month of August, on the night before the Feast of St. Dominic the Confessor, and before Matins, died our most beloved Brother Theodoric of Kleef. He was the third Prior of our House, and an old man and full of days, for he was seventy-six years old, and had fulfilled fifty-five years in the Religious Life. When the first Brothers were invested here, he was the fourth to receive the Habit, and from the very beginning of the monastery, before any of the Brothers had received investiture, he with the Clerks and Lay folk in this place had begun to serve the Lord in much poverty and toil. Moreover, it had always been his desire that by the favour of the Lord he might end his life in this same House with the Brothers, and be buried amongst them, and so it came about, for he was laid in the eastern passage by the side of our Brother, Henry Cremer, whom he had drawn to the Religious Life, and whom he had loved with all his heart. Thus it came

about that as they had loved one another in life, so in death and in the grave they were not divided.

In the same year and month, on the day following the Feast of Sixtus, Pope and Martyr, and when noon was past, died Dirk, son of Wychmann of Arnheim, who had lived here for two years.

In the same year, in the month of August, on the Feast of St. Lawrence the Martyr, and in the morning after Prime, died Matthias, son of William of Overcamp, a Donat of our House, who had been overseer of husbandry for a great while. He often suffered pain from the stone, and at length falling sick with a disease in the throat, and being bowed with age, he fell on sleep in holy peace in the seventy-second year of his age, having endured many labours; for when the monastery was founded he came hither with his father, William, a tailor, of great age, and being then but ten years old, he began that good course which was brought to this happy issue. He was laid in the burying-ground of the Lay folk before the entrance to the broad cloister. At this time of pestilence in our House it befel that a certain Brother, while sitting in his cell, heard a sound at the door thereof as of one knocking twice, but when he arose to open the door he could not see or find any man there. And marvelling at the matter he thought that perhaps some one might be like to die, and on the next day the bell was tolled for the death of Dirk Struve, a Laic of our household. So also before the death of Brother Theodoric of Kleef, once the Prior of our House, the like thing happened two days before he fell sick.

In the year 1454, on the morning of the fourteenth day of March and after Prime, died Brother Gerard Hombolt, a Convert, in the fifty-fifth year of his age. He had fulfilled thirty years in the Religious Life, and for a great while was cellarer of the House, in which office he was faithful and zealous for the common good, so far as our poverty in temporal wealth and the number of persons to be served did allow. He was buried in the western passage before the door of the church with the other Converts.

In the same year, on the sixteenth day of May, the venerable Father John Lap died in the House of Elisabethdal, near Roermund, of which he was Prior, but he had made his profession as a Brother of our House of Mount St. Agnes. He was in the fifty-fifth year of his age, and being a lover of discipline and of the Religious Life had fulfilled thirty years and nearly two months therein.

In the same year, on the day before the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, and about the second hour after noon, died Dionysius Valkenborch, a Donate of our House, being seventy-three years of age. He had lived an humble and holy life with us for a great while, near to fifty-five years; at first his tasks were to feed the swine and milk the cows, but when he grew old he was made the gatekeeper, with another to help him, and ending his temporal life in a good old age he left a fair ensample to all.

In the same year, in the month of August, on the day following the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, there was a heavy rain both in the uplands and the lowlands, and much corn and seed perished thereby, and we suffered great loss in our farm by the overflowing of many waters. In the same year, on the Feast of Gallus the Confessor, and at about the ninth hour, when Compline was ended, died Brother John Zandwijn of Renen, a Priest of our House, being thirty-eight years old. He had suffered long from the stone, and was patient and gentle, and he had fulfilled sixteen years and near seven months in the Religious Life. On the day before the Feast of St. Luke, when Mass was ended, he was buried by the side of Theodoric of Kleef in the eastern passage of the cloister; here he rests in peace, freed from the many toils and perils of this life, for his desire was to be released and to be with Christ.

In the year 1455, on the Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul, two Clerks were invested, namely, Brother Henry, son of Bruno, and Theodoric, son of Arnold Wanninck; both came from Deventer, and had honourable parents and friends, and in the year following they made their profession together upon the same day.

In the same year, on the Octave of the Feast of the Apostles Peter and Paul, when Matins was ended, died our venerable Father, William Voerniken, the fourth Prior of Windesem. He was buried in the choir by the side of the venerable Prior John Huesden, for these two greatly loved one another, wherefore after death they shared one tomb in the church. He was eighty-two years of age, and had been the second Prior of the House on Mount St. Agnes.

In the same year, on the 22nd of April, when Prime was done, died John Mastebroick, a Laic and servant of our House, who was faithful in labour and devout in prayer. He was about seventy years old, and had lived with us for nearly forty-five years, and he departed to the Lord in holy peace,

desiring an eternal reward for his many labours. He was laid with the servants in the burial-ground of the Lay folk and Donates of our House.

In the same year, on the 9th of October, the day before the Feast of Marcus, Pope and Confessor, when Compline was done, died Gerard, son of Hermann, a Laic and servant of our House; he was a stonemason and a faithful worker so far as his powers did allow, but he was often sick with the complaint of the stone, from the tortures whereof he died, though he bore the same with much patience; and he left all the goods he had as a bequest to the monastery.

In the year of the Lord 1455, on the 17th day of November, within the Octave of the Feast of St. Martin the Bishop, four altars in our church were consecrated by Iodocus, who was Bishop Suffragan, Doctor in Sacred Theology, and belonged to the order of Preachers. He had received a general commission from the General Chapter of Utrecht, and he consecrated the several altars after this wise. First the altar which is on the north of the church, and in the upper part thereof, in honour of St. Michael the Archangel and all the holy Angels: secondly, the altar which standeth upon the same side, but in the lower part of the church, in honour of the holy Confessors, Gregory, Ambrose, Jerome, Bernard, Francis, and Lebuin. Thirdly, the altar which is in the midst of the church, in honour of the holy Confessors, Martin the Bishop, Willibrord the Bishop, Nicholas the Bishop, and Antony the Confessor. Fourthly, the altar which standeth on the south side, toward the end of the church, in honour of the Saints Anne, Elizabeth, Monica, mother of our holy Father Augustine, and all holy widows.

Likewise he consecrated the Holy Cross that is over the door of the choir, and certain images of Saints, namely, of St. Augustine the Bishop and St. Agnes the Virgin: also two small figures, the first of St. Mary Magdalene, the second of St. Agnes in the Coffer; also the image that is over the altar of the Holy Cross that sheweth the blessed Virgin Mary holding the Crucified Lord, Who lieth on her breast: also the images of St. James the Apostle, St. Katherine the Virgin, and St. Barbara, Virgin and Martyr.

In the year of the Lord 1456, on the Feast of St. Antony the Confessor, Brother Gerard, son of Dirk, who came from a place near Zwolle, was invested as a Convert. He was a man well stricken in age, and had lived with us in honest wise for thirty years, being a good husbandman; before

his investiture he had been an humble Donate, for we had many of that degree amongst us.

In the same year, on the day following the Feast of St. James the Apostle, died John Smyt, a Laic and servant of our House. He was drowned in a deep pool that had been filled by the rain, and with him perished four very good horses that were drawing a cart to fetch fodder. At that time the weather was very rainy, so that many crops were destroyed thereby. The Brothers therefore brought back this servant of God to the House, and after Compline laid him in the burial-ground of the Laics. Moreover, they celebrated Mass for him, and offered up prayers that he might receive the reward of his labours. By God's providence, he and the other Laics of our House had received Communion, as was the custom, on St. James's day: and he himself had lived with us for one year, being skilful and diligent in the smith's craft.

In all things blessed be God, Who scourgeth us, and also healeth our stripes, for though we lost above an hundred florins by the drowning of the horses, yet did the good Lord save us and our country from the army of the Duke of Burgundy, who was laying siege to Deventer; for after the Feast of St. Matthew peace and concord were restored between the Duke and the cities and people of this land.

In the same year of the Lord 1456, on the Feast day of St. Lucia, Virgin and Martyr, and in the morning when High Mass for her festival was already begun, died that fervent lover of discipline, Brother William Coman. He was born in Amsterdam, in Holland, and for a great while had lived an humble life amongst our Brothers, and he was seventy-eight years and four months old. On the Feast of St. Brixius, Bishop and Confessor, he had fulfilled, by the help of God, fifty-five years in the Religious Life, for this was the anniversary of his investiture, and on this day he celebrated Mass for the last time, for he was sick from that day forward until the Feast day of St. Lucia, whereon he ended his life with a happy agony; and he was buried in the eastern passage by the side of our Brother John Zantwijk.

This William Coman left many a good ensample of patience, poverty, and abstinence, for the imitation of them that come after; and in the days of the venerable Prior, William Vorniken (who was the second to hold that office in our House) he was Procurator, and afterwards Sub-Prior. Then for three years he was Prior of the House at Amersfoort, after which he was Rector

of the Sisters at Bronope near Kampen for fourteen years; but at last, as age had come upon him, and his hearing failed by little and little, he returned to our House and Brotherhood, where he died in holy peace, and he was buried amongst the Brothers after the accustomed manner.

In the same year died Gerard Smullinc, the first Rector and Prior of the House at Roermund, who, after that he was absolved from his office, went to gain Indulgences at the Shrine of St. James at Compostella, in which place he was buried.

The anniversary of his death and that of his parents is kept on the day following the Feast of St. Elizabeth, because we know not surely the day thereof.

In the year of the Lord 1457, on the day of St. Benedict the Abbot, and at eleven o'clock at night, Theodoric Herxen, a venerable Father of pious memory, and a priest of seemly life, died at Zwolle, being seventy-six years old. He was the second Rector of the House of Clerks in Zwolle, and ruled it for forty-seven years; also he was Confessor to many devout Brothers and Sisters, and his whole life, from the time that he was of full age, was spent in discipline of character and in virtue.

CHAPTER XXVII

How Father Henry, the fourth Prior, resigned his office, and how Father George was chosen to be the fifth Prior

IN the year 1458, on the day following the Feast of St. Matthias the Apostle, Brother Henry, son of William, the fourth Prior of the House, resigned his office. Now he had lain sick for a great while and was weak from fever; wherefore, prostrate upon his bed in the presence of all the Brothers, he besought them with many tears and exhorted them to agree to choose another Prior in his room, according to the lawful statutes of the Order.

Hearing this all the Brothers were grieved, and for three days they fasted after the accustomed manner, praying for guidance in the coming election, which was held on the Thursday after the third Sunday in Lent, for which day the Introit is “Mine eyes are ever toward the Lord.” So when the Mass of the Holy Spirit had been said and the hours were done, the election was held in the choir in the presence of all the Brothers; and that venerable Father the Prior of Windesem was also present with them to hear the opinion of each one; likewise Brother John Naeldwijn and Brother James of Cologne, Prior of the House of the Blessed Virgin at Belheem in Zwolle.

When the opinion of each had been heard, George, who was a Brother of our House, but at this time Prior of Briel, was chosen by the greater number of votes. Some indeed chose Bero, Prior of Beverwijk, but all consented humbly and peaceably to the judgment of the greater number; so by common consent Brother George was elected, being a Father most beloved, and himself a lover of the rule.

In the same year four Brothers were invested, three of them on the day following the Feast of St. George the Martyr, and the names of these were Henry Hierde of Herderwije in Geldria, Hermann Borken of Westphalia in the diocese of Munster, and Theodoric of Zwolle. The fourth, namely, John Orsoy of Kleef, was invested soon after, on the Feast of the birthday of our Father St. Augustine.

In the same year there was a notable pestilence in Deventer, Zwolle, and Kampen, the which had raged in Utrecht and the neighbouring places in the previous year. Verily this scourge of God was pious and pitiful towards Christian folk, as hindering them from dwelling long in this world so as to love it rather than the kingdom of Heaven. At this time many devout Sisters in Deventer and Zwolle departed to Christ.

On the day following the Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed and Glorious Virgin Mary died our beloved Brother Henry Ruhorst, the Sub-Prior of our House, being forty years old, and he was buried in the eastern cloister by the side of our Brother William Coman.

In the same year and month, on the Feast of St. Jerome and after midday, died Hermann, son of John, a Laic who was Sub-Infirmarius, being twenty-six years old. He was a poor man, who was born in a place near Wessel in the district of Kleef; and being received by us, he showed himself ready to do whatever was laid upon him.

In the same year, in the month of October, and at noon on the Feast day of St. Dionysius the Bishop, Brother Gerard Wessep died in Zwolle. He had been sent to the Monastery of Belheem, and of his obedience and brotherly love he went thither after the death of many of the Brothers of the House; for of these ten had died, as well as certain Laics that were of the household. After the hour of Vespers he was borne to a carriage and brought therein to our House, as he had desired, and he was buried with the Brothers in the eastern cloister, by the side of the Sub-Prior. At the time of his death he had fulfilled almost fifty-six years in the Order, being in the seventy-seventh year of his age. He wrote many books in the Latin and Teutonic tongues for the choir, the library, and for sale; and he was forward to perform many labours for the common good. Above all he was very faithful and ready in tending the sick and dying till the moment of their departure; for he feared not then to tend and stand by diseased and plague stricken folk, serving them for the sake of God and brotherly love. So the Lord

willed to reward him also, with the Brothers that were dead in Belheem; wherefore, when he had spent fifteen days in Zwolle, he fell sick of the plague, and God took him from the toil and trouble of this present life and gave him eternal peace and rest, which things—as oft he told me with clasped hands—he had long desired.

In the same year, on the day following the Feast of St. Martin the Bishop, at the hour of Vespers, died our beloved Brother James Cluit, a devout Priest and first Rector of Udem, being sixty-three years old, and he was buried before the High Altar. His memory shall continue to be praised and blessed, for he was beloved of God, an ensample to us all, and his own stern judge.

In the year of the Lord 1459, on the Feast of the Epiphany and at about the fifth hour in the morning before Prime, died Everard of Wetteren, the cook, a devout Donate, who was eighty years of age and over. He had dwelt formerly in Deventer with Lambert Gale, a tailor, and in the days of Florentius, who sent him to Windesem, he was first tailor of the House; but the Brothers at Windesem sent him on to Mount St. Agnes before the members of that community were invested with the Religious habit, and there he helped to sew and make the garments in which those first four Brothers were habited, whose investiture in the year 1398 is described above. After some while spent in this office he was sent to serve in the kitchen as assistant, and he afterwards became chief cook, in which post he served all the Brothers faithfully for above thirty years. At length, wearied with years, he was relieved from his labours and slept in peace, being an old man and full of many days.

In the same year, within the Octave of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary and on the Feast day of the holy martyrs Protus and Hyacinthus, at noon died Gerard Hombolt of Utrecht, a Donate of our House, who was fifty-nine years old. He was very zealous, faithful, and devout in the service of God, particularly in the things which pertain to the glory and honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary; moreover, he procured a most fair image of her, and a corona of polished brass holding many candles, and certain other ornaments that are set above the altar of the Blessed Virgin. These things he did out of his great devotion, and with a pious intention of adorning our church in honour of the Blessed Virgin and St. Agnes.

First he was Hospitarius and afterward Refectorarius to the Brothers, and all things that were committed to his charge he kept honestly and in cleanly fashion, seeing to the provision of all needful vessels, napkins, and towels. On a time when many guests had come to the House he bade the cook provide all things necessary for them; but the cook, being troubled at this unaccustomed number, was heavy at heart, for he feared lest he might not be able to satisfy all as he fain would do, but Gerard Hombolt, putting his trust in the Lord, said, “Make the sign of the Holy Cross over the pots and the cooked food and God shall give His blessing and a sufficiency.” So the cook did as Gerard had said, and blessed the provision again and again in faith, and behold the good Lord, seeing their faith, gave them an increase so that all had enough; and when the meal was done there was abundance left over, insomuch that the fragments that remained sufficed for a full meal at supper.

In his youth, and before he entered the monastery, Gerard, out of his great devotion, visited the Holy Land—Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and the other places hallowed by our Saviour; and he was disposed, if it should be allowed him, to visit them once again before his death. But the good Lord changed his love for the earthly Jerusalem to love for the Jerusalem which is in Heaven, into which he entered (as I hope) through the intercession of the Blessed and Glorious Virgin; for on all the Vigils before Her feasts it was his wont to fast, eating nought save bread nor drinking aught save beer; and it was within the Octave of the Feast of Her Nativity that he departed in holy peace out of this present world to the realms of Heaven, having made a good confession, being contrite, and having received the Unction. Much wealth also came to our House through his means, and he died in the fifty-ninth year of his age, having lived with us for thirty-five years.

In the year of the Lord 1460, after the Feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary, there was a mighty frost. The bitter cold began on the Feast day of St. Scholastica the Virgin (which was the first Sunday in Lent), and endured until the middle of the fast, so that men and horses heavily laden could walk everywhere upon the frozen waters in safety, and carry their goods across the same. Likewise in many places there was lack of fodder and straw wherewith to feed the beasts, for the ground was dry and frost bound, wherefore men could not get them fresh grass to feed the cattle.

For this cause some poor men brake up the roofs of their houses and gave of the thatch to the beasts: and this lack of grass endured until the first of May.

In the same year, in the month of April, and on the second Sunday after Easter, which was the day before the Feast of Vitalis the Martyr, Brother Gerard Cortbeen was invested: he was a Priest, and a native of Herderwije, a good man, honest, faithful, and thirty-two years of age.

In the same year our church was adorned in seemly wise, the roof thereof and all the flat spaces of the inner walls being painted in fair colours to the glory of God and in honour of St. Agnes the Patron Saint of the church. Amid the bright colours were written these three names Jesus, Mary, Agnes, which of holy purpose were painted in large and black letters, and they stand forth clearly to be read by the eyes of all that enter the church.

In the same year, on the Feast of the Dispersion of the Apostles, between the hours of Tierce and High Mass, died Deric, son of William, a carpenter and servant of our household who was a Fellow Commoner. He was born in Zwolle and was now thirty years of age, having lived a good, humble, and peaceable life in this House for nearly eleven years.

In the year of the Lord 1461, on the morning of the Feast of St. Emerentiana the Virgin, and before the hour of Prime, died Herder Stael, a very honest man, and a fellow citizen with us at Zwolle, being seventy-four years old. He was a special and faithful friend to our House for many years. As was his wife also particularly in the troubled times of Bishop Rudolph, when our Brothers were constrained to leave the monastery and to go to the House belonging to our Order in Lunenkerck. At that time this good man bought our crops as they stood in the fields near the monastery, and out of an honest purpose bade his servants to reap and harvest the same. Afterward he sent the fruits of the ground, and the provender that had been gathered, to our Brothers in Lunenkerck by little and little, for they had been sent thither as it were to a place of exile. This same Herder Stael lived with us for nearly a year before his death, being moved so to do by a deep desire, and having a holy and firm purpose to serve God. He died as aforesaid in holy peace and in an honoured old age, and his body was laid in the broad cloister; his friends from Zwolle being present at his burial.

CHAPTER XXVIII

Of the ancient Reliquary of St. Agnes, and how it was gotten

IN the same year 1461, George, the venerable Father of our House, asked and obtained from the Canons of the great church at Utrecht the ancient Reliquary of the most holy Agnes, Virgin and Martyr, and the beloved Patron of our House, but her relics were not therein contained. It was in her honour that our church was consecrated in the year of the Lord 1412, and on the Friday in Easter week, as is set forth more fully above in the chapter entitled “Of the Consecration of our Church.”

Two of our Brothers that were ordained to be Priests, namely, Brother Henry, son of Bruno, and Brother Theodoric Wanninck, brought back this holy Reliquary with them, journeying from Utrecht by way of Holland, and across the sea, not without danger and fear, for the sea was turbulent. Yet through the help of God, and the merits of St. Agnes the Virgin, they were protected from these perils and reached an haven of safety. A few days afterward, on the eve of the Feast of St. Scholastica the Virgin, they brought the Reliquary to Mount St. Agnes, and our Brothers, with all the Laics of our household, hearing this, did rejoice exceedingly.

The Reliquary was borne into the church with all devotion and reverence and placed in the sanctuary of the choir near the High Altar and beneath the arch in the northern wall. The bones of the Saint had rested for nearly three hundred and fifty years in this Reliquary, which was an humble one, being of wood and covered with plates of brass and gilded work. But at last a new and most fair coffer of silver adorned with gold was made for her by the Canons of the great Church of St. Martin at Utrecht.

Likewise one should note that it was in the year of the Lord 1413, in the time of Frederick of Blanckenhem, the Reverend Bishop of Utrecht, that the relics of this most Blessed Saint Agnes the Virgin were removed with all reverence from the ancient wooden Reliquary into this new one of silver fairly gilt. This was done on the second of December, being the day following the Feast of Ægidius the Abbot, by that Reverend man Hermann Lochorst, Dean of the great Church of St. Martin the Bishop. He it was, chiefly, who had procured that the holy relics of the Saint should be removed in this manner; and a great while afterward George, our venerable Father and Prior, earnestly begged for the ancient Reliquary, which our House had long desired, and by the insistence of his friends he obtained the same from the Chapter and Canons of the church. These things were done in the year 1461, as is written above.

In the year of the Lord 1462, on the night of the Feast of St. Juliana, Virgin and Martyr, died our beloved Brother John, son of Hessel of Zuermont, who came from Utrecht. He was a timid man, and ready for any lowly task; moreover, his will was always good to serve the monastery to the best of his power. Yet through the weakness of his nature and pains in his head, he often stayed outside the choir, but by his work without he redeemed the time which he could not spend in devotion within the church.

A few days before his death he said to certain of the Brothers that he should die shortly, and indeed the end came somewhat suddenly to him, for on the day before the Feast of Juliana the Virgin he was well and cheerful, but in the night following some weakness, whereof we knew not, came upon him, and he was found dead before the bed in his cell; being clad in his under garment he lay prostrate upon the floor with his feet stretched out and his arms close to his side, looking as though he were commending himself to God and to the Holy Angels: for no man was with him at the last to give him comfort, since none knew of his agony—but after supper-time, because they saw that he was not present, certain Brothers sought him in the cell where he slept, and they found that he was gone away from this world, and had fled to Christ as we do piously hope and believe. He came of very good and honest parents in Utrecht, and had many friends and kinsmen that were living the Religious Life. And so at length, after many labours and much pain of heart and body, he was taken away from the miseries of this present life, in the fifty-fourth year of his age, having spent twenty-nine

years in the Religious Life. After the office of the Mass had been said duly, and the Psalms and Vigils had been recited, he was buried in the eastern side of the cloister, on the right of Brother Gerard Wesep.

In the same year, after the Epiphany, there was a most bitter frost, which lasted throughout Lent and longer, and the great drought was hurtful to the pasture lands whereon the beasts were fed.

CHAPTER XXIX

Of the death of Brother Henry, son of William, the fourth Prior of our House

IN the same year, and upon the 10th day of March, being the second day before the Feast of St. Gregory the Pope, died our most beloved Brother of pious memory, Henry, son of William, who was a native of Deventer. He departed at the fifth hour after midday, when the Vigils of the dead had been sung; and our beloved Father George and all the Brothers were present with him, praying during his happy death struggle, and many Laics of our household were there also.

He had been the fourth Prior of our House, and having sought instantly to be absolved from his office because of his oft infirmities, he lived thereafter for four years amongst the Brothers, being humble, gentle, exemplary, devout, and reverent to all. To none was he burdensome, but to all men kindly, comfortable, pitiful, helpful, cheerful, modest, peaceable, and silent. Amid elders and prelates he was lowly and courteous, towards the young and weakly he was sweet and amiable. Because of his good and modest manners, his uprightness, fidelity, and the honest bearing which he showed (as a Religious ought to do) whether walking or standing, speaking or keeping silence, he long held the office of Procurator for the House; for he was chosen for that post in the first place, and afterward was made Sub-Prior. But at last, by God's ordinance, he was promoted to be the fourth Prior of our community, in which office he was confirmed in all peace and charity. For ten years he continued to be Prior, ruling those that were under him by the goodness and modesty of his character rather than by rough speech; he was instant in his zeal for reading, for prayer, and holy meditations whensoever such exercises were possible. Well might one write

and say of him many of those things that the blessed Bernard doth write concerning Humbert, the servant of God, who was the devout Sub-Prior in St. Bernard's House. Him did Henry strive to imitate, for he too was devout, beloved of God and man, and a servant of Christ. He died in the sixty-first year of his age, having entered upon the forty-second year of his Religious Life, and he was buried on the right side of Brother John Zuermont.

In the same year, on the day before the Feast of St. Ambrose the Bishop—this day being the Saturday before Passion Sunday—and at the fifth hour of the morning before Prime, died Dirk ten Water, an honourable citizen and magistrate of Zwolle, who had been received as a Fellow Commoner, for he greatly favoured the devout.

He abode in our House as a guest for six weeks, being sickly the while, but it was his intention to serve God and to remain with us: also he was a notable benefactor to the House in his lifetime and at his death; and he died in peace in the sixty-eighth year of his age, being fortified by the sacraments of the church. He was buried in the tomb of his mother, Swane ten Water, beneath a sarcophagus of stone that standeth in our church before the Altar of Holy Cross.

In the same year, on the last day of August, and within the Octave of the Feast of St. Augustine, before Matins, died the humble and devout Laic, John Bobert, being forty years old. He came from the diocese of Treves, and formerly was our shepherd, but afterward he became porter to the monastery, and he was very faithful and pitiful to the poor. Having fulfilled twelve years in this House, he fell asleep in peace, and was laid in the burial-ground of the Lay folk.

In the same year, during Advent, on the Octave of the Feast of St. Andrew the Apostle, and before Prime, died an aged man named Gerard Poelman. He was a Donat of our House, and was born in Zwolle, but he lived with us for sixty-two years, having come to us in the days when we were still very poor, and lacked goods, buildings, books, and holy vestments. His parents often succoured us and did us much kindness, for they were somewhat wealthy, and they gave or lent us money to buy provision, because they loved their sons who dwelt with us, namely, Henry, and this Gerard that was the younger brother. These two had one sister, whose name was Adelaide, a devout virgin, who for many years ruled over the House of the Béguines at Nyerstadt, where at length she died amid the

nuns, and she was buried by the Brothers of the Regular Order in Bethlehem.

At first this Gerard was the tailor of our monastery, as was also his brother Henry, but afterwards he faithfully discharged the duty of fisherman, but when weakness compelled him to abandon this task, he became the gardener, and was skilful in growing vegetables and herbs of divers kinds. At last, wearied with years and overborne with toil, he fell asleep in a good old age, for he was eighty-one years old, and in return for his labours received a crown of life at the hands of the King of Glory. He was laid in the burial-ground of the Laics and servants of the House, on the western side of our church, and the venerable, devout, and holy Father George performed the rites.

In the year 1463, on the day before the Feast of Quirinus the Martyr, that is on March 29th, and at about the eighth hour when Compline was done, died John, son of James, a faithful Laic of our House and a good husbandman; he was an Oblate and Resignate, and was born in Dalssen; moreover, he proved himself to be useful and skilled in his work among our husbandmen. He was well beloved, and lived in this monastery for twenty-eight years, but having fulfilled forty-six years of life, he departed in holy peace, and was buried near Gerard Poelman, in the burial-ground of the Laics, on the Wednesday before Palm Sunday.

In the same year, on the 15th of May, being the fifth Sunday after Easter, and the third day after the Feast of Servatius, three young Clerks were invested, namely, Peter, son of Simon, of Liege, William, son of Peregrinus, of Kampen, and Arnold Wanninck of Deventer, own brother to Theodoric Wanninck of our community. Brother Peter, the first of these, was twenty-three years old; the second, namely, William, was twenty-one; and Arnold Wanninck, the younger, was twenty. At their investiture our Father George performed the ceremony and celebrated High Mass of the Resurrection.

In the year 1464, on the 15th of May, being the Tuesday after the Feast of the Ascension of our Lord, Hubert, son of Nicholas, of Amersfoort, who was thirty-five years old, was invested as a Convert of our House. For some years he had been town crier, and he was well beloved, being a trusty friend to the devout Brothers and Sisters in their business. When his wife was dead and his sons had received their portions, he chose to leave the world

and humbly to serve God in the monastery; so after a probation of nearly three years he was invested solemnly as a Convert.

In the same year, and on the day following the Feast of St. James the Apostle, died Andrew, son of Hermann, of Sichele, a faithful and devout Laic of our House and an Oblate to God. He had no possessions of his own, nor did he leave behind him any private store, no not one mite. He came to our monastery on the Feast day of St. Agnes, in the year of the Lord 1419, being then twenty-one years old; and having fulfilled with us in the service of God nearly forty-four years, being then sixty-five years of age, he departed from this world. His death came about through a sudden mischance, for having fallen from a horse, he was hurt grievously, and commending himself to God, he fell asleep in holy faith and peace. And he was laid in the burial-ground of the Laics.

In the same year, on the Feast day of St. Matthew, Apostle and Evangelist, there fell a great tempest of wind, and many trees were broken and torn from the earth; likewise large ships were sunk in the sea, and in many parts, as also at Rome, the pestilence raged so that a great multitude of men that had thought to live long died thereof.

In the year of the Lord 1465, on the Feast of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a young Clerk named Reyner Koetken was invested. He was nineteen years of age, and sprung from an honourable stock, having good parents and friends at Zwolle: moreover, he had three sisters who were living the Religious Life as Béguines in the House of Wyron that lieth near the city without the northern gate.

In the same year, in the month of March, and during the Lenten season, God succoured our House by granting us to catch a great number of fishes in the river Vecht, which is near the monastery, and these sufficed for all that dwelt with us, and likewise for the poor, and for strangers; also many traders came from the regions of Westphalia and Saxony to buy these fish which are called smelts.

In the same year a new monastery was founded in Zwolle for the Order of Preachers.

In the same year, in the month of July, and on the day before the Feast of St. Praxedes the Virgin, died our beloved Brother Henry Lymborgh, a Priest, who was born in Zwolle. He was fifty years old, and he was buried in the eastern cloister, by the side of Henry, son of William, our fourth Prior.

Often he fell sick with the stone, and at the end, having fulfilled twenty-seven years in the Religious Life, he had a slight stroke of palsy in the face, and he fell asleep in peace amongst the Brothers. In the same year, in the month of October, and on the day following the Feast of St. Michael the Archangel (that is, the night of the Feast of St. Leodegarius, Bishop and Martyr), died John Tyman, a native of Holland. He was a faithful Laic and an Oblate, and when he finished his course was seventy years of age.

For forty-five years he lived with us humbly, and in obedience working with the husbandmen, albeit for a long time he had been lame; and after a long trial by sickness he rendered up his soul with patience, and was laid in the western burying-ground with the other Laics.

In the same year, and on the day before the Feast of the holy Martyrs, Crispin and Crispian, one Bernard Irte died at Zwolle, being a citizen of that city, and son of Lambert of Irten, a magistrate of the State. He was a friend to our House, and during his lifetime often visited our church, in which out of his devotion to St. Agnes the Virgin he desired to be buried, and he was laid with the Converts in the western cloister before the door of the church.

In the year 1466, on the night of the Feast day of St. Maurus the Abbot, and before Matins, died Wolter Eskens, the father of Gerlac, our cellarer; he was an ancient man, being ninety years old, and he had been formerly our husbandman on a certain farm pertaining to the monastery at Windesem, but he was born in the town of Raelten. In his old age he left his friends and acquaintance, following his son Gerlac, who was a faithful Oblate, and he lived in our House for nearly eleven years before his death.

Long had he been bowed with age, yet he hastened to the church every morning to hear Mass, leaning upon a staff. He was very good and patient in bearing his bodily weakness, and he fell asleep in the Lord, giving thanks. So after Mass had been said for him, he was buried with the Laics and servants of our House, in the burying-place of the Donates.

In the same year, on the Octave of the Feast of St. Agnes the Virgin, died Christian, a Priest, who was eighty years old. He was Curate of Ter Heyne, and a special friend to our House, and out of his devotion he chose to be buried with our Brothers, so he was laid in the eastern cloister in the same grave with Hermann Gruter the Priest.

In the year of the Lord 1467, on the third day of the month of March, and before Compline, died Hysbrand, our tailor, a Resignate and Oblate, who

was born in Amsterdam, a town of Holland. For thirty years he had lived with us, and he was laid in the burying-place of the Laics, being seventy-two years of age when he died.

In the same year, on the Feast day of the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, died Tidemann Mulart, a native of Hasselt. He was a Resignate and an Oblate, who had long discharged many hard tasks as a servant of our House, for he abode with us for near of forty-four years, and at length he departed in peace, being seventy-two years old, and he was laid in the burying-place of the Laics.

In the same year the Brothers and members of the House at Windesem builded and enlarged their ancient church to promote the honour of God.

In the same year, after the Feast of Pentecost, our Father George builded a new kitchen that was greater and more stoutly wrought than the former, for the old kitchen was roofed with reeds and thatch, and he builded this new one by reason of the peril of fire, and also to rid us of certain ill conveniences, and to promote the good of the community.

In the same year, on the night of the Assumption of the Blessed and Glorious Virgin Mary, and after the Te Deum had been sung, died the devout Laic, Nicholas Bodiken, who was an Oblate of our House. He served Christ faithfully, and showed special devotion in singing the praises of the Most Blessed Virgin.

A few days before his death he was seized with grievous pain in the head and his other members, but being purged by this sore suffering in the body, he gained an happy issue therefrom, for his end was such as he would have wished, and he met the same with a good will and with complete resignation on the day aforesaid, which was the solemn feast of the Blessed Virgin.

When supper was ended, Nones of the Blessed Virgin were sung, and Vigils recited for him, and then he was laid in the burying-place of the Laics and amongst the Oblates and Donates of our House; being in the seventy-ninth year of his age when he died. He had lived for a great while with us, but the needs of his mother and grandmother constrained him to take care of them, which thing he did, having taken counsel with the Prior of our House, but after that they died in Zwolle, he returned to the monastery at Mount St. Agnes. After this he fulfilled thirty years in complete subjection to our rule,

and on the Feast day aforesaid he fell asleep in the Lord, and all that dwelt in this House bore witness to his good report.

On this same Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Mary, our most beloved Father George took the Ciborium of the Venerable Sacrament from the altar with all reverence, and the whole body of members, going before him in procession round the cloister, sang the Response, “Felix namque.” After they had returned to the choir, they bowed the knee before the Revered Sacrament which was placed upon the altar, and sang the Antiphon, “Media Vita,” with the verse and the Collect proper to times of pestilence, for at this time the plague had begun both here and in many places.

In the same year, by the blessing of God, our orchard bare much fruit, but the fields, though they stood thick with corn, were hurt by the continued rain that fell at harvest time. Wherefore frequent prayers to God for fair weather were made at the time of Mass, and the seven psalms were recited in the choir.

In the same year, on the Feast of St. Simon and St. Jude, died Arnold of Nemel, an aged farmer, who was a neighbour and a good friend to our House. He was laid in the western cloister before the door of the church, and in one grave with his son.

In the same year, after the Feast of All Saints, and after Compline, on the day before the Feast of Leonard the Confessor, died Arnold, son of Gerard of Werendorp, who was our miller, a faithful Laic and Fellow Commoner of our House. He was a man greatly beloved and profitable to the Laics of our household and all the Brothers, and he died after that he had finished the thirty-third year of his age, having continued with us for fourteen years. He was laid in the burying-place of our Laics by the side of Nicholas Bodiken.

In the same year, 1467, Albert, son of Hubert of Amersfoort, was invested on the day of the Conception of the Glorious Virgin Mary, being twenty-three years old, but he had attended the school at Zwolle for four years.

In the year of the Lord 1468, in the month of April, on the day following the Feast of St. Ambrose the Bishop and in the middle of the night, before Lauds, died Godefried Hyselhan of Kampen, a Laic and Donat of our House, being eighty-three years of age. For a great while he was the miller of our monastery, and a man faithful and upright in his conversation.

Afterward he became our porter, and showed himself pitiful and kindly to the poor; but at length, worn out with years, he died in peace, for God had mercy on him: and he was laid in the burying-ground of the Laics.

In the year of the Lord 1469, on the day after the Feast of the Holy Innocents—which day is the Feast of St. Thomas of Canterbury, and falleth within the Octave of the Lord's Nativity—died Brother Gerard that was called Cortbeen, whose death befell after supper, and before the hour of Vespers. Before he entered the Religious Life he was a Priest, and he was born at Herderwije, but for ten years past he had lived the Religious Life amongst us in piety and devotion. Often he endured much toil in time of harvest, and in winter also he would cut wood in the marshland, for he was a strong man and apt for coarse and heavy toil, yet he neglected not the inner things of God. At the last he was afflicted of the Lord with a dropsy in the legs, and after bearing the scourge of this infirmity he departed out of this world to the Lord in the forty-second year of his age. So Mass and Vigils for the dead were said for him, and he was buried in the eastern cloister.

In the year of the Lord 1470, on the third day after the Feast of Servatius the Bishop, two Clerks, and one Laic who was a Convert, were invested. This was on a week day, so as to avoid the concourse of men, and the gathering together of a crowd of friends from the world.

Of these Clerks the first was Otto Graes of Deventer, who was twenty-two years old and had two brothers living the Religious Life as Priests in the Regular Order: of these one was at Windesem, the other in the House of Bethlehem at Zwolle. The second of the Clerks was Rudolph, son of Gerard, a native of Amersfoort, who was twenty-one years old, and had sojourned for a while at Zwolle before he entered the monastery. The third was Henry Kalker, a Novice and Convert, who came from the region of Kleef, and was thirty-seven years of age: he lived with us before his investiture, dwelling amongst the Laics, and he was a good tailor, but sometimes he served in the kitchen, and sometimes ministered to the sick: after a while, by reason of his uprightness, he was invested as a Convert.

In the same year, on the day following the Feast of the holy Martyr Maurice and his companions, and after Matins had begun, died our Brother Peter Herbort, a Deacon who was sixty-five years old. He was of weak frame, and by nature very frail, so that he was unable to observe many of

the statutes, yet he often received discipline in the Chapter for his faults: also he washed the heads of the Brothers when they were shaven, and rejoiced to serve the others as reader in the Refectory. At length, having fulfilled forty-three years in the habit of the Regular Order, the time came for him to go forth; so being contrite of heart, having made his confession and received the Communion and the Unction, he fell asleep in the Lord in good confidence and faith amid the prayers of the Brothers. For our Father George, with many of the Brothers, was present with him, but the rest remained in the choir to sing Matins and Lauds. After supper Vigils were sung for him and for our other benefactors, and he was buried in the eastern cloister by the side of our Brother Gerard Cortbeen.

In the year of the Lord 1471, that is to say, on the Feast day of Antony the Confessor, and in the morning after High Mass, died that devout Laic, Gerlac, son of John, who was born hard by Zwolle, that is to say, at Dese. He was seventy-two years old, and for the last fifty-three years and more had lived with us in great humility, simplicity, and patience. He bore many toils and privations, and amongst the other virtues that he showed, he was especially notable for the virtue of silence, so that through all the day he spoke but very little, and even during the hours of toil he gave an example of silence to others.

A short while before his death he was smitten with apoplexy, and became partly delirious: and he was laid in our burying-ground with the rest of the Laics.

SO FAR THE CHRONICLE WAS WRITTEN BY THOMAS OF KEMPEN; THE RESIDUE THEREOF WAS DONE BY ANOTHER

IN the same year, on the Feast of St. James the Less, and after Compline, died our most beloved Brother Thomas Hemerken, who was born in the city of Kempen, in the diocese of Cologne. He was in the ninety-second year of his age, and this was the sixty-third year after his investiture; likewise he had been a Priest for above fifty-seven years.

In the days of his youth he was an hearer of Florentius at Deventer, by whom also he was sent, when twenty years old, to his own brother, who at that time was Prior of Mount St. Agnes. From this same brother he received his investiture after six years of probation, and from the early days of the monastery he endured great poverty and many labours and temptations.

Moreover, he wrote that complete copy of the Bible which we use, and also many other books for the use of the House, and for sale. Likewise he composed divers little books for the edification of the young, which books were plain and simple in style, but mighty in the matter thereof and in their effectual operation.

The thought of the Lord's passion filled his heart with love, and he was wondrous comfortable to the troubled and the tempted; but as age grew upon him he was vexed with a dropsy in the legs, and so fell asleep in the Lord and was buried in the eastern cloister by the side of Brother Peter Herbort. In the same year, on the Feast day of St. Lambert, and after Prime, Brother Hermann Craen the Vestiarius died of the plague, being sixty-four years old. In the beginning he was Sacristan, but afterward, and for above fifteen years, Vestiarius. Then for thirteen years he held the office of Procurator, but being set aside from that office, he was for the second time

appointed to be Vestiarius, in which vocation he gained much praise for that he provided sufficiently for every man so far as the means of the House did allow. After that he was set aside from his office of Procurator he bore himself patiently: and he had lived the Religious Life with us for thirty-eight years and a half: but in the day aforesaid, when Vigils had been sung for him, he was buried after supper-time in the eastern passage.

In the same year, on the day before the Feast of St. Francis, and after Matins, Wichman Spuele died of the plague. He was a young Laic about twenty-five years of age who was born at Doesborgh, but for above four years he had lived with us; and being chosen to be Sub-Infirmarius he served the sick with kindness and in gracious wise, wherefore he obtained great praise from all men. He was laid in the burial-ground of the Laics, but on the day following, namely, on the Feast of St. Francis, and just before one o'clock, three Priests and one Lay Brother were anointed with the oil of the sick. In the same year, on the day after the Feast of St. Francis, Brother Henry, son of Paul of Mechlin, who was a Priest, died of the plague. He was nearly forty-six years of age, and was Infirmarius, in which same office he had served the Brothers faithfully for fifteen years; but he had lived with us in the Religious Life for twenty-four years and a half, and he was buried in the eastern cloister beneath the steps, and in the same tomb with Nicholas Creyenscot, who died before.

It is told of this Brother, as an ensample and memorial of him, that on the third day after that he was smitten with the plague, seeing that sure sign of death which is vulgarly called the "Death Spot," and while his strength of mind and body were yet whole in him, he asked for the habit to be brought wherein, after the custom of the Order, he must be buried; and when it was given him he put it on without help from another, and with his own hand sewed up the forepart thereof lest others might unwittingly look upon his body. Then after supper-time was ended, he, with the Infirmarius who was acting for him, read the Litanies and the seven penitential psalms for all his negligences; and as an act of gratitude for all the benefits that God had bestowed upon him, he added the Te Deum Laudamus. So at length, about the hour of Vespers, having made a good confession, he rendered up his soul, Father George being there present with him, while the Brothers were singing the verses antiphonally in the choir.

In the same year, on the Feast of St. Marcus the Pope, when dinner was ended, Peter, son of Nicholas, a Laic of our household, died of the plague. He was born in Amsterdam, and was about fifty years old, but he had lived with us for twenty-five years and a half, being employed in the brewery. He was a strong man of great stature, and a pattern to the Laics by reason of his close observance of the habit of silence, his regularity in reading the Vigils, frequenting the church, and such like exercises. He was laid in the burial-ground of the Laics.

In the same year, on the day following the Feast of St. Dionysius the Martyr, and before the ninth hour in the evening, Brother Peter, son of Simon, who was born in Liège, died of the plague; now he had lived with us in the Religious Life for nine years and a half. By nature he was very timid and modest, and at the beginning of his conversion he had suffered many temptations to cowardice, albeit he was afterwards delivered from these by the grace of God. So he yearned for death with great desire, longing to be released and to be with Christ, and he was laid in the eastern cloister.

In the same year, on the day following the Feast of St. Luke the Evangelist, and after Matins, Peter, son of John, died of the same plague. He was a Laic and Resignate of about seventy-three years of age, who was born in Utrecht; but he had lived with us for about fifty-four years, and was employed in binding books. By nature he was very weakly, especially in the head, and he often received discipline for his negligences, being punished therefore: yet he did gladly serve for the Brothers at Mass, and at the last, in the time of the plague, he got his death through ministering to the sick, and died in the presence of Father George, and was laid with the other Laics in their burying-ground.

In the same year, on the day following the Feast of the Eleven Thousand Virgins, and in the morning after Prime, died our Brother John Kysendaël, who was born at Orsoy in the land of Kleef. He was almost thirty-four years old, and had lived with us in the Religious Life for fourteen years and nearly two months, being much beloved for his holy conversation and his virtuous life. Moreover, he served the Brothers humbly in his office of sacristan for nearly four years, and so that versicle which is sung for confessors was apt and fitting for him “who was ever pious and prudent, lowly and modest, sober and chaste and peaceful so long as this present life endured in his bodily limbs.” He was buried in the eastern cloister.

Two hours afterwards, on the same day, and of the same plague, died Hermann Crom, a Laic and Resignate, who was born in Utrecht, being now sixty-four years old, but he had lived with us for nearly thirty-four years; he was of great service to the Brothers, first in the office of Sub-Infirmarius, and afterward in making ready the Refectory and ministering to the other needs of those Brothers that were weak and old. At length, as he served the sick, he was smitten with the plague, and was laid in the burying-ground of the Laics.

In the same year, on the Feast of St. Simon and St. Jude, and after supper-time, Laurentius died of this same plague. He was a Laic and Donate, and his native place was Alsen, a town near Tyel in the parts of Geldria. He was seventy-three years of age, and had been barber to the House, having lived with us for near forty-five years. A great company of strangers resorted to him hoping to be cured by his skill as a surgeon, for he had some good knowledge of that art. He was laid in the burying-place of the Laics.

In the same year, on the Feast of St. Martin the Bishop, and before the tenth hour in the evening, Ludolph the miller died of the plague. He was born at Delden in Twenthe, and was nearly thirty-seven years old, but he had lived with us for three years and a half. He fell sick through tending the plague-stricken, for he was at this time their faithful servant; and having made a good confession, and being filled with a fervent love of God, he died and was laid in the burying-ground of the Laics.

In the year of the Lord 1472, on the Feast day of St. Ambrose, which fell on the Sunday after Easter, died Brother Everard ter Huet, a native of Zwolle, and Prior at Bergum, where for ten years and more he had ruled the Brothers in laudable wise. Having fulfilled forty-three years of life, twenty-five of which he had passed as a member of our Order, he died at last, being smitten with the plague, and was buried in the church of the aforesaid monastery.

In the same year, on the fourth day after the Feast of St. Ambrose, and when Prime was done, died our Brother John Lent that was a native of a place near Zwolle, being nearly eighty years old; but he had lived with us in the Religious Life for about fifty-nine years. He was very strict in his observance of the rule, and a pattern to the Brothers, but at length, being worn out with the disease called stone, he died, and was buried in the eastern cloister. By his writing he was of much profit to the monastery, for

he attained great excellence in this art, wherefore he wrote many books for sale, and many for the choir and the libraries, wherein he left a notable example for others to imitate.

In the same year, on the day of St. Potentiana the Virgin (which was the Tuesday after Pentecost), and when Vespers were done, Johson of Tric died of a rupture. He was a Laic and Resignate, a native of Zwolle, and seventy-five years old; but he had lived with us for fifty-one years, being a pattern to the Laics by the toils that he bore, and his obedience to discipline. By reason of his trustiness he was often set over the husbandmen at Lunenkerck at the time of our exile, and also at home, that is, at Mount St. Agnes. But at the last he died suddenly and without making confession, for death was beforehand with him; howbeit he received the Unction, and he had made his confession two days before he died, and had received Communion with the others on the Feast of Pentecost.

In the same year, on the fourth day after the Feast of St. Lucia, died Gherard, son of Hermann, a Laic of our household, who was born near Albergen in Twenthe. He was nearly fifty years old, and had lived with us for twenty-three years. His stature was small, but his mind great, and he directed our husbandry with all diligence; but at length he fell into a consumption owing to a kick from a horse, and having lingered a long while, he died, and was laid in the burying-ground of the Laics.

In the year of the Lord 1473, on the 28th day of June, two Brothers were invested as Clerks. The first was Stephen Putselaer, who was born at Doesborgh, and had attended the school at Deventer; he was now twenty-two years old. The second was John, son of Tric, a native of Amsterdam, who had sojourned at the school of Zwolle for nearly four years, and at the time of his investiture he was at the beginning of his eighteenth year.

In the year of the Lord 1474, on the day before the Feast of St. Agatha, Virgin and Martyr, and in the morning between the sixth and seventh hours, died Brother Otto Lyman, a native of Goch, being nearly seventy-six years old, but he had lived with us for fifty-five years and a little more. He was very zealous for discipline, and most strict in observing the rule of silence; also it was his custom to attend all the services in the church, each in its season, so much so that although weakened by old age and an apoplexy, he did not forgo this custom to the very end of his life. Besides this he carefully observed a voluntary poverty both in the matter of his clothing

and with regard to the furniture of his cell. During his life he wrote many books for the library; but at length his infirmities grew upon him, and he fell asleep in the Lord in the presence of the venerable Prior and the Brothers, and was buried in the eastern cloister.

In the year of the Lord 1474, on the day of St. Urban, Bishop and Martyr, brother Martin, son of Nicholas, was invested. He was nineteen years of age and was born at Amsterdam, but he had attended the school of Brussels for three years.

In the year of the Lord 1474, on the second day after the Feast of the Conception of the Virgin Mary, and after Matins, died Brother Theodoric Veneman, who was born near Zwolle, being now seventy-two years old; but he had lived a laudable life with us for fifty-two years, lacking two months. He was of ripe character and a pattern Brother; moreover, he was zealous in observing the rule of silence and quietness, but at length he fell sick and slept in the Lord, and the venerable Prior George and the Brothers were with him at his death. He was buried in the eastern cloister.

In the year of the Lord 1474, on the day of St. Agapitus the Martyr, died Goswin ter Beeck, a Laic of our household, who was born in Zwolle, being —years old, but he had lived with us for about fifty-three years; his life was a very pattern, and well ordered, both in word and deed; he had been our miller for more than forty years, and was very faithful to the House. In that he greatly feared that death should come suddenly, he made his confession to the venerable Prior after due preparation, and a short time afterwards he met that death which he had feared, for God ordained it so.

In the same year died our beloved Brother Gerard, son of Tric, that was a Convert. This befell on the second day after the Feast of St. Lucia, Virgin and Martyr, and after Matins. He was eighty-two years old, and for many years had been a Donate, but having lived honestly amongst us for more than thirty years he was invested as a Convert, for so it seemed good to the Prior and the whole Brotherhood. He was most strict in observing discipline, weighty in word and character, austere toward himself, and a lover of poverty. Moreover, he directed our husbandry, and that of two other Houses of our Order, to wit, the Houses at Anyhen and at Lunenkerc, also that of the monastery belonging to the Order of St. Benedict which is called the House of Kleerwater, near Hattem; for out of charity to the Brothers of that House the venerable Prior lent Gerard to them. So having lived with us

for nearly fifty-four years in this honest and devout wise, he fell asleep in the Lord and was buried in the western passage which is called “The Strangers’ Passage,” together with the other Converts.

In the year 1475, on the fourth day after the Feast of Maurice and his companions, and about the fifth hour in the morning, died William Brant, a Laic of our household, but a Clerk in regard to learning. He was born at Kampen, and was now nearly seventy-five years old; but he had lived with us for nearly sixty years. Although he was notable for knowledge, yet he desired to continue humbly, modestly, and in quietness unto his life’s end in the condition of a Laic, and specially to avoid the sin of detraction. Beside his unceasing labours in other matters, he awakened the Brothers for Prime during forty years.

In the year 1473, on the third day after the Feast of St. Matthias the Apostle, and in the morning, died Encbert of Tyveren, a Donat and Fellow Commoner of our House, being eighty-three years old. Amongst other virtuous habits, he had one that is specially worthy to be remembered, namely, that if any did him a wrong, he would easily and without hesitation grant full forgiveness for the same, whenever the offender showed any sign of charity toward him. Being fired, moreover, with charity and love for God and his neighbour, and with a zeal for souls that ceased not night or day, he strove for their good whenever he had opportunity; and of this many can bear witness, both men and women, for whom he obtained places fit for them wherein they might serve God.

In the same year and week, namely, on the fifth day after the Feast of St. Matthias, John Bodien (?) died at Deventer. He was a Laic of our household, and being oppressed by infirmity he went to Deventer to take counsel of a physician, and there died in his brother’s house; and since he was born of a good stock, his body was brought back to us with honour by his friends, and laid in the burying-ground of the Lay folk. For a few years after his conversion he served in the kitchen, and coming to his life’s end he fulfilled the toils of many years in a short space.

In the year of the Lord 1477, on the Octave of the Feast of the visitation of the Blessed Mary, and after Nones, that is at about the eighth hour, died Gerlac, son of Wolter. He was a devout man and very trusty; a Laic and Resignate that was born at Ralt, and he was nearly seventy-one years old. On the day before his death, and after Compline, he took his supper in the

kitchen according to his custom (for he was cellarer) and by a mysterious visitation of God he suddenly was deprived of all sense and strength. He lost the power of speech, and he lay until next day struck down with apoplexy without speaking or eating, and died after Nones at the hour aforesaid. He had lived with us for nearly forty years, during twenty-three of which he had fulfilled the duties of the aforesaid office with faithfulness and care, being almost always in his cell and ready to carry out the wishes of the Brothers. He was laid with the other Laics in that burying-ground of ours that pertains to them of that condition.

In the same year, on the Feast of St. Ægidius, and after Compline, that is to say about the middle of the seventh hour, died that devout Laic, Albert, son of Florentius. He was a Resignate and about seventy-three years old, but he had lived with us for nearly forty-five years, and for a long while served the Brothers patiently in the kitchen. But afterwards he was very serviceable to the sick, and to the Infirmarius, by catching and bringing them fresh fish. He was laid with the others in the burying-ground of the Laics.

FROM THE CHRONICLE OF OUR
BROTHER THOMAS OF KEMPEN
CONCERNING MATTERS NOT
PERTAINING TO OUR HOUSE

CHAPTER I

Concerning the year in which that reverend man, Florentius of Wevelichoven, was made Bishop of Utrecht

IN the year of the Lord 1479, Florentius of Wevelichoven, aforetime Bishop of Minister, was enthroned as Bishop of the Church of Utrecht on the Festival of St. Willibrord, first Bishop of that See.

He was a prudent man of honest life, ripe age, and a lover of religion, and under his rule, which was during the reign of our Lord Pope Urban VI, Gerard Groote flourished, that venerable master who was truly great by reason of his life, his learning, and the words of his preaching.

CHAPTER II

Of the death of John Ruesbroeck, first Prior of the Groenendaal

IN the year of the Lord 1381, and on the second day of December, being the Octave of St. Katherine, Virgin and Martyr, the venerable and most devout Master John Ruesbroeck died in the district of Brabant. He was the first Prior of the Monastery of the Groenendaal near Brussels, which Monastery pertains to the Order of Canons Regular; he was then in the eighty-eighth year of his age, and he was buried before the north end of the High Altar in the choir. He took the Religious habit in the aforesaid place amongst the first who were there invested, being then sixty years of age; and, by the help of God, he fulfilled the office of the Priesthood for sixty-four years. His holy and glorious doctrine was published far and wide over the land of Germany, and giveth light thereto. This was he whom Master Gerard Groote visited, together with John, a scholar from Zwolle, for he thought that his writings were worthy to be compared with those of the greatest doctors. Moreover, he had put forth many books that were most devout, touching matters of the higher understanding, which books, of his wisdom, he wrote in the Teutonic tongue; and he poured forth in liberal abundance that grace of heavenly sweetness which he had received from God, for the use of his neighbour and them that should come after in the Church. There are eleven books which he composed either before or after his entrance into the Religious Life; and less the tale should be incomplete, the book of his letters doth make that number up to twelve.

There was in the same monastery, under this venerable Master, a Convert whose name was John, a man very devout, who did humbly devote himself to his life's end to serving in the kitchen, and he was illumined with special

grace for divine contemplation. He compiled a great and notable book, filled with high and heavenly doctrine, in the which he doth commend his most beloved father, John Ruesbroeck, in most excellent wise.

In the same monastery also were certain other most devout Fathers and Religious Brothers, eminent for their life and wisdom, as their holy works that have come down to us do testify.

Concerning the life and writings of John Ruesbroeck and Brother John Cocus, more is told in a little book that hath been put forth of late, and that is entitled “Of the Origin of the Monastery of the Groenendaal.”

CHAPTER III

Of the death of the venerable Master Gerard Groote, a man most devout

IN the year of the Lord 1384, on the Feast day of the blessed Bernard the Abbot, and at the fifth hour, after Vespers, Gerard, surnamed Groote, died at Deventer, in the time of the pestilence; he was a venerable man and beloved of God, and the forty-fourth year of his age was nearly done.

His body was borne to the Parish Church of the most Blessed Virgin, Mother of God, and therein was laid with due honour not far from the sanctuary. His father's name was Werner Groote, and he was a Schepen and magistrate of the same city; his mother was called Heylwige, and both her husband and she were of high place and mighty in honour and riches, judged after the measure of worldly dignity; but Gerard, by God's inspiration, put aside the burden of riches and despised the pomps of the world on the which he had relied carelessly for a long while, and for the sake of an humble Christ took upon him a garb of humility. Suddenly he was changed into another man, so that all wondered, and he became a rule of life to Clerks and Lay folk alike. Hereafter, by the pattern of his good conversation and the exhortation of his holy preaching, he withdrew many persons from the vanities of the world and laid upon them the gentle yoke of Christ. Likewise he resigned all his ecclesiastical benefices, but he kept some small portion of his father's goods to provide for his own necessities. Much he gave to the Religious, and his dwelling-house and homestead he bequeathed for ever to the poor Sisters, or Béguines, whom he had gathered together in that same place. Of his humility he took upon him the rank of a deacon so that he might be able to preach, but he would not take priestly orders because of the awe in which he held the same.

On a time he went toward Zwolle in company with Peter, Curate of the Church of Deventer, and his companion questioned him with friendly boldness, saying: "Beloved Master, why wilt thou not be made Priest, since thou art well lettered and fitted to rule others?" But Gerard made answer: "I would not be Curate of Zwolle, no, not for a single night, for my cap full of golden florins." And Peter being astonished said: "What then shall we feeble and wretched folk do, for our knowledge and our life are less worthy than thine?" And this word of Master Gerard had so great weight that this same Peter did afterward renounce his pastoral charge and did maintain himself upon a single benefice, and that one to which no cure was attached. Gerard, moreover, wrote profitable treatises, and many letters to divers persons, and from these writings one may see readily enough how great a zeal for souls was in him, and how deep an understanding of the Scriptures. He translated two books of John Ruesbroeck from the Teutonic into the Latin tongue, and these are entitled: "Ecce Sponsus" and "De gradibus amoris." Likewise he translated "The Hours of the Blessed Virgin," and certain of the Hours from the Latin into the Teutonic tongue, so that simple and unlearned Laics might have in their mother tongue matter wherewith to occupy themselves in prayer on holy days; and also that the faithful, reciting these Hours, or hearing them recited by other devout persons, might the more readily keep themselves from many vanities and from idle talking, and so, being assisted by these holy readings, might make progress in the love of God and in singing the divine praises. Once a certain man who was united to him in the bonds of friendship, asked him, saying: "Most beloved Master, of what use are all these books which you carry on so great journeys?" And Gerard answered: "For good living a few books are enough; but we must have all these for the instruction of others and to defend the truth, so that if any might not believe me yet they may assent to the authority of the saints." Many other good things also Master Gerard did in his life, as certain worthy records of him tell us, so that from the small band of his disciples there grew at length a great company of devout persons.

CHAPTER IV

Of the great eulogy passed upon Gerard by a certain doctor

MASTER GERARD of holy memory, he who was called “The Great,” has passed happily to the Lord. Truly he was “The Great,” for in his knowledge of all the liberal sciences, both natural and moral, of civil law, canon law, and of theology, he was second to no one in the world, and all these branches of learning were united in him.

He was a man of such saintliness and gave so good an example in his mortification of the flesh, his refusal of temporal advantages, his contempt for the world, his brotherly love for all, his zeal for the salvation of souls, his effectual preaching, his reprobation and hatred of wickedness, his withstanding of heretics, his enforcement of the canon law against those that broke the vow of chastity, his conversion to the spiritual life of divers men and women who had formerly lived according to the world, and his loyalty to our Lord Urban the Sixth—in all those things I say he gave so good an example, that many thousands of men testify to the belief that is in them that he was not less great in these virtues than he was in the aforesaid sciences. Master William of Salvarvilla, Cantor at Paris, Archdeacon of Brabant in the Church of Liège, an eminent doctor in theology, compiled the above eulogy from that which he heard from the lips of men worthy of credit, and from his own knowledge of Master Gerard, and he believed beyond all doubt that it was true.

CHAPTER V

How, after his death, the number of the Devout and the Order of Regulars did increase

AFTER the death of the venerable Master Gerard Groote, the devotion of faithful persons in Deventer, Zwolle, Kampen and the neighbouring towns began to grow mightily in the Lord, so that in a short time there arose many congregations of men and women that served God, dwelling together in common and in chastity of life after the manner of the primitive Church and that laudable custom of the holy Fathers that was introduced by the Apostles.

Some of these who could ill abide the concourse of people in the cities, sought habitations that did befit them far from the places where men do congregate, and having builded them poor little houses, determined to lead a hidden life therein after the example of the ancient Fathers; but in process of time, as their numbers and their goods increased, they took upon them the habit of holy religion, for God so ordered it, and converted their houses into Monasteries of the Order of Canons Regular, thinking thereby to be the more profitable. This same memorable Master, inspired with a spirit of prophecy, foretold this thing, namely, that the number of the devout should increase mightily, for to a certain Priest, who was his friend, and afterward became a Canon Regular at Zwolle (from whom also I heard the saying), he said: “Behold, beloved, this good thing which by God’s help hath been here begun, shall be increased yet more, and this little spark shall kindle many fires throughout all Holland and Geldria.”

Thanks be to God that as we have heard, so have we seen with our own eyes the fulfilment of this prophecy, and that not only in the regions round about, but also in the parts afar off and in the upper provinces. He had it likewise in mind to found, with the help of certain friends, a monastery for Regulars who should take the habit which he had seen in Brabant in the house of John Ruesbroeck, but this purpose he committed to the followers whom he had made firm in the faith of Christ, that they should fulfil it, for death was beforehand with him, and this was, indeed, fulfilled effectually by these same disciples in after days.

CHAPTER VI

Of the consecration of the Church, and the investiture of the first Brothers in Windesem

IN the year of the Lord 1387, on the day before the Feast of St. Luke the Evangelist, the first Church of the Monastery in Windesem was consecrated in honour of the glorious Virgin Mary, Mother of God.

This place received the name Windesem from the village that lieth near to it, and it is one mile from Zwolle, toward the south; near the eastern side thereof is the River Yssel; also some space away is Hattem, the strongest fortress in Geldria.

On this same day six Brothers made their profession and were invested with the habit of the Order of Canons Regular, who observe the rule of Augustine, the glorious Bishop and Father of our Order. The names of these are as followeth:

Brother Henry of Huxaria, a Priest.

Brother Werner of Lochem, in Geldria, the first Prior of the House there.

Brother John of Kempen, in the diocese of Cologne, who was afterward Prior at Mount St. Agnes.

Brother Henry Wilde of Hertzogenbosch, in Brabant.

Brother Bertold ten Hove, a native of Holland, who conveyed to us his patrimony and the place where the monastery standeth.

Brother Henry Wilsen of Kampen, a man of great probity, who was formerly a great one in the world. He was eloquent in discourse, humble and earnest in the service of God.

With these and others that loved holy religion, this new foundation of the Order of Canons Regular in the diocese of Utrecht had its beginning after the happy death of Master Gerard Groote, and under the rule of Florentius,

Bishop of Utrecht, it increased by little and little, but in process of time it began to grow yet more fruitfully in divers places. All the men above named, save only one, had been disciples of Master Gerard, by whom they, with many other Clerks, were drawn to the amending of their lives, being imbued with his wholesome exhortation.

CHAPTER VII

Of the death of John de Gronde, a Priest

IN the year of the Lord 1392, on the 17th day of May, being the day following the Feast of St. John before the Latin Gate, and at the fourth hour in the morning, John de Gronde died at Deventer, in the house of Florentius. He was a devout Priest and a mighty Preacher of the Word, and he was in the fortieth year of his age. The town of Octmesheim, in the district of Twent, and the diocese of Cologne, was his native place, and he was a man adorned with modesty and eloquence, and the venerable Master Gerard let summon him from Amsterdam in Holland to hear the confessions of the devout, likewise Gerard committed to him the governance of the Sisters of his House. For awhile he abode with the first Brothers in the ancient House of Florentius, and rose up with the others in the morning to recite the Hours; and when the time for rising came, he awoke straightway and went forthwith to arouse the other Brothers, knocking and saying: "Arise, watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." Of this thing Master Gerard maketh mention in the letter which he wrote to the priests at Amsterdam, what time he besought that John should be sent to him, for this alacrity did especially please him.

As his death drew on, Father Florentius, who earned the love of all the devout, stood by him to comfort and console him; to whom John spake, saying: "Lo! the adversary doth strive to disquiet me, and would confound me at the last." But Florentius answered: "Fear not but trust in the Lord, and keep silence as to those things that are cast up against thee." Then John, as one truly obedient, said: "In the name of the Lord," and these were the last words that he spake before his death. He was buried in the Church of the Blessed Mary, ever Virgin, by the side of Master Gerard and in the same tomb, for it was in this church that he had oft proclaimed aloud the Word of

God. Likewise from time to time he would preach at Zwolle and hold colloquy with the Brothers on the mount, urging them to hold with constant mind to the course they had begun. So these two on earth are covered by one stone, and one Stone, that is an heavenly, did make them firm in the true faith; as they loved one another in life, so in death their bodies are not divided.

CHAPTER VIII

Of the death of the most Reverend Florentius of Wevelichoven, Bishop of Utrecht

IN the year of the Lord 1393, on the Feast day of St. Ambrose the Bishop (which in that year was Good Friday), while the Holy Office of the Lord's Passion was being said in the church, our most Reverend Lord Florentius of Wevelichoven, Bishop of Utrecht, departed from the light of the world. He died in the city of Hardenberch, having ruled his diocese for twelve years and five months in laudable and glorious wise, and his body was taken to the Church of the Blessed Martin at Utrecht, and was buried with honour in the choir beneath the steps of the sanctuary. Here a taper is kept lighted as a memorial of his good reputation, for verily he was a lover of the true light, and a defender of his country. In discipline he was very strict; and spent naught needlessly or to any unprofitable end, but all that was justly owed he paid honestly, repaying loans, restoring buildings that were decayed, setting up new ones, fortifying towns and castles. He loved the things of God and prudently disposed of worldly matters; by his servants he was beloved, to the poor he was pitiful; he cherished all devout persons, and was accepted of Clerks and people.

CHAPTER IX

How Frederick of Blanckenheim was chosen to be Bishop

IN the same year, the noble and famous Lord Frederick of Blanckenheim, formerly Bishop of Strasburg, was chosen to the See of Utrecht and confirmed by the authority of the Apostolic See. He was one of lofty mind, famous for knowledge and prudence, and by the help of God he ruled the diocese for many years with great glory, and guarded his country by his victorious might. Beneath his rule the Order of Canons Regular and the devout multitude of Brothers and Sisters spread far and wide, and rejoiced in their prosperity in all regions that lay beneath his jurisdiction.

In this year also three monasteries were founded in Holland, near Amsterdam. One belonging to the Carthusian Order, one to the Canons Regular, and one to the nuns of that same order: this last lieth within the city and near the ditch.

CHAPTER X

How the monastery at Northorn was founded

IN the year of the Lord 1394, about the time of the Feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Clerks belonging to the household and congregation of that venerable Priest, Master Everard of Almelo, a Bachelor in Physic or Medicine, began to prepare a place for a monastery; for of their own free will and by his council they had determined to build an house in Vrensueghen upon an hereditament that is called Enoldint. So having obtained license from that Reverend Lord Otto ten Hoyer, Bishop of Munster, and having the consent of the Dean, Archdeacon, and Chapter, which was given on the 1st day of May, a small Oratory was consecrated in this same place during the Advent following and on the Feast day of St. Thomas the Apostle. This Oratory stood where now the church is builded, and there on this same day four Priests of the household of Everard were invested with the habit of the Order of Canons Regular; they were admitted by Wenomar, Bishop of Sebalde, a member of the third Order, and Vicar-General for Pontifical Acts to Otto, the Reverend Bishop of Munster: now the names of the Brothers by him admitted are these:

The first was Henry Kyndeshof of Deventer, and there were also Herpe of Lippe, Hermann Plectenberrich, and John of Julich. Of these Hermann Plectenberrich was chosen to be the first Prior, and the four abode by themselves under the authority of the Bishop of Munster, because their founders would not have them subject to any other, but in the year of the Lord 1400 they were placed under the authority of the Chapter-General of Windesem, which is in the diocese of Utrecht, and lieth near Zwolle, as it were one mile distant.

CHAPTER XI

Of the death of that most devout Priest Florentius, Vicar of the Church of Deventer

IN the year of the Lord 1400, on the day before the Feast of the Annunciation of the Blessed Mary ever Virgin, and when it was now late, and the Ave Maria had rung, there died in his own House at Deventer the Priest Florentius Radewin. He was a man of holy life and the beloved Father of all the devout, an humble Vicar of the Church at Deventer, a Master of the University of Prague, and he was now in the fiftieth year of his age. He was born at Leerdam that is subject to the Count of Arkel, but when he heard of the fame of Master Gerard, he left his native land and became his devout follower and disciple, and in a short space he was a Father to many devout persons, and the first founder of the congregation of Clerks in Deventer.

His garb was simple and gray in colour, his bearing was composed, his bodily presence full of grace, and his aspect lovable. His hair was black, but his beard somewhat gray; his face was thin and had but little colour, his forehead was bald and his gait and bearing were full of dignity.

Once he came on a visitation to Mount St. Agnes, and the Brothers were glad at his coming, and the elder amongst them asked him to deliver some discourse, so he spoke a few words to them on humility and charity, and at the end he added: "See now, ye may be sickened of these words that ye have heard from me," for he did not think that he could say aught worthy to be heard. Nevertheless he was mighty to comfort the devout, and it was a pleasant thing to see him and hear his words. Also the words wherein he confessed that he was not skilled to speak were received as very edifying,

and some of the Religious wrote what he said on their tablets and in their books.

This most holy man of God flourished in the days of that venerable Lord Florentius of Wevelichoven and the illustrious Frederick of Blanckenhem, the two famous Bishops of Utrecht.

When his death was announced to them of the city, the Canons and Clerks came together to attend the burying of so great a man, and a vast multitude of people followed as far as to the Church of St. Lebuin, wherein he was buried before the altar he had served, which is dedicated in honour of St. Paul. His life that was adorned with virtue is more fully set forth in the DIALOGUS NOVITIORUM.

CHAPTER XII

Of the death of Everard of Eza, a Curate in Almelo and a great master of physic

IN the year of the Lord 1404, on the first day of the month of April, died that reverend man Everard of Eza, the Curate of Almelo and a great master in physic. He often gave the benefits of his healing art without price to many that were sick, but especially to the poor. Likewise he founded and in a special way provided for the Monastery of the Blessed Virgin in the Wood near Northorn, in the Countship of Benthem, and he procured that some of the Clerks who lived with him should be invested there. Amongst physicians he had a great reputation; of the nobles he was honoured, by worldlings he was feared, by the religious he was beloved, and for a long while his fame was good in the land. Moreover, he had been a close friend to Florentius, the Vicar of the Church at Deventer, and rejoiced to visit him; and he often succoured him in his infirmities and expended anxious care upon him; likewise he said of Florentius that it was a thing above human nature that a man so weak should live so long, unless it were that God preserved him.

But let it not be a marvel to any how it came about that these two reverend Fathers and Masters were thus of one heart in the service of God, for He who brought together the Blessed Peter and Paul to preach in Rome did also unite Florentius and Everard in Deventer, to be as it were two bright lights in the world, to dwell together as Brothers like minded in the House and there to comfort themselves and others.

But the conversion of this reverend Master Everard came about after this manner, and was brought by the co-operation of God to an wholesome effect. When the venerable Master Gerard, of whom mention is made

above, was preaching the Word of God to the people outside the walls of Deventer, Everard hastened to come to his preaching, for he had heard Gerard's fame and was puffed up with the wisdom of this world; so he came not of brotherly love, but out of a curious mind, desiring to know whether the Master's teaching was consonant with his fame, for he did not hunger for uprightness but rather would catch him in his talk. Yet he stood not openly among the common and simple folk, but behind a pillar, as one that hideth; and behold Almighty God Who knoweth the heart, neither can any hide from His face, did fill the quiver of the preacher with sharp arrows wherewith in secret he pierced through the heart of this curious hearer, who, being pricked thereby, laid aside all the naughtiness of his former vanity, and became a devout disciple of the preacher. For when the preaching was done, he came near to the man of God, and made known how the Lord had dealt with him by means of the preaching, and how this had befallen him as if the preacher had traversed all the hidden places of his heart and seen all the secrets thereof. So Master Gerard received him and confirmed his charity toward him, and at length Everard became his companion and helper in preaching; but not long after his conversion Master Gerard departed to the Lord. After his departure the old enemy stirred up no small enmity against the devout disciples, but God was present with them, giving to them patience and constancy. Now many of the devout were ignorant of Master Everard's conversion, but he wished to join himself to the disciples of Christ that dwelt in Deventer in the House of Florentius; the Brothers, however, when they saw him were afraid, and began to flee from before his face as lambs from before the wolf, and they gat them into the hidden places of their cells; yea, and Florentius himself was fearful, for he knew not what Everard might mean, who aforetime had been harsh enough and had opposed the devout Brothers.

Everard therefore said to Florentius: "Wherefore do these Brothers flee away?" and he answered: "They know not with what mind thou art come," but Everard said, "I am come to amend my life," and when he was still held in suspicion of Florentius, he said after due thought and protesting his innocence: "If ye will not believe my words, at least believe mine acts—I pray you give me a cell for a season, and prove me therein of what spirit I am." Therefore they took him and assigned to him a cell where he lived long and was wholly converted; for as once he had gained great knowledge

of medicine, so now he received no small light in the law of the Lord and in the holy Scriptures.

After this he accepted the dispensation of God towards him, namely, to be still and attend to his heavenly calling, and also following herein the example of Florentius, to gather together into his own house at Almelo certain Clerks and Lay folk, with whom he lived for many years under due discipline. Moreover, lest they who were so gathered together should be scattered abroad after his death, he began to think of a fit place where they might serve God together, and by His help he found such a place as he desired for the founding of a monastery, and here those Brothers whom he had formerly invested in an humble manner were placed. To them he distributed gifts out of his own substance, namely, gold and silver, books and other things for their use, for building and for needful expenses. As regardeth the foundation of this monastery see above, under the year of the Lord 1394. He was buried in his own church at Almelo, where he had governed his people for many years, and he left a good memorial among the devout whom he cherished and loved as a father. On a time when I attended the school at Deventer, I fell sick, and with such care did he tend me that by the mercy of God a like sickness fell not upon me for many years after.

In the same year, on the Feast day of St. Gregory the Pope, the building of our church was begun by brother John of Kempen, the first Prior.

CHAPTER XIII

Of the death of the Priest Amilius that succeeded Florentius at Deventer

IN the year of the Lord 1404, on the day before the Feast of St. Barnabas the Apostle, Amilius the Priest died at Deventer; he was a mighty zealot for souls, kindly in feeding the poor, austere to himself, compassionate to the sick, comfortable to the troubled, and he was about thirty-two years of age.

He came from the parts of Geldria near Tyele, and coming to Deventer he attended school there for a while, but when he was amongst the foremost of the students he left the school and clave to Florentius, for it was his desire to serve God. Afterward Florentius procured his promotion to the priesthood, and before his death placed him over the whole congregation, likewise he did commit to his charge the governance of the House as being his beloved disciple. This burden that was laid upon him Amilius undertook with much sorrow, and though he was not minded to disobey the command of so great a Father, yet with weeping eyes, lamentation and sighing, he professed himself unworthy of this preferment; likewise in his secret prayer he mourned bitterly, for he desired rather to have the tasks of the kitchen laid upon him than to be preferred to the honoured post of governing men. For in the kitchen he ever rejoiced in his servitude, being safer therein, and having a good conscience; but in the other office a thousand dangers met him, bringing no small care with them. Yet God did not long delay to answer the prayers and sighs of his humble servant, for his burden on earth endured but a short while, and having fulfilled four years and near to three months in the care of governance, the Lord rewarded his faithful labours with eternal rest. His body was laid in the burying-ground of St. Lebuin the Confessor, near that of Lubbert, a Priest of his own House. There also was

John of Viana buried, and there Reyner Haerlem the acolyth and many other devout Brothers and Clerks of the House of Florentius rest in peace. After the death of Amilius, John Haerlem succeeded as ruler of the House, but he was afterwards chosen to govern the Sisters at Zwolle, and Godefried of Wesel filled his place, for the Fathers in their prudence did so ordain it.

CHAPTER XIV

Of the first investiture of the Sisters of our Order in Diepenvene near Deventer

IN the year 1408, on the Feast of St. Agnes the Virgin, the Sisters of the Order of Canons Regular in Diepenvene near Deventer were first invested. This investiture was done by Brother John Huesden, the venerable Prior of Windesem, and there were present also the Prior of the House of the Fount of the Blessed Virgin near Arnheim, Brother John of Kempen, Prior of Mount St. Agnes, and many other devout persons, both men and women, who came together eagerly to be present on so notable a day. So then there was great joy for the heavenly marriage of many devout matrons and virgins; but the sound of much weeping ascended to heaven also. The number of them who took on them the habit and the order that followeth the rule of the Blessed Augustine the Bishop was forty-three, and of these three first made their profession the same day, but the others remained Novices for a year. Many of these Sisters were gathered and brought from Deventer from the house of Master Gerard Groote, after that the numbers there began to be increased, and John Brincerinck governed and guided them for a great while.

CHAPTER XV

How the monastery in Budiken was reformed

IN the year of the Lord 1409, William van den Berg, Bishop elect of Paderborn, began to reform the monastery at Budiken, transferring it from the rule of Canons Secular to that of Canons Regular; and he published on this occasion the licence for their transference, at the end of which are the words following: “To the honoured John Wael, Prior of the Monastery at Zwolle, that is in the diocese of Utrecht, we do by these presents grant, concede, and allow the privileges hereafter following, namely, that he may attach to the Church and Monastery at Budiken a suitable congregation of men devoted to God, when opportunity doth offer, and that they be under the Order of Canons Regular, conforming to the rule observed in the Monastery at Zwolle so far as the rule there obtaining doth permit.” We are led to grant this licence for this special reason, namely, that St. Meynulsus, the founder of this monastery, is believed to have belonged to the Order aforenamed; let the said John Wael therefore set over this same congregation a Prior or Superior as may seem expedient to him.

CHAPTER XVI

Of the death of Gerard Kalker, a devout Priest, and Rector of the House of Clerks

IN the year of the Lord 1409, on the Vigil of the Nativity of Christ, Gerard Kalker died at Zwolle. He was a devout Priest and Rector of the House of Clerks in the said town, and his age was thirty-six years. The town named Kalker in the district of Kleef was his native place, but when he was attending the school at Zwolle he joined himself to the devout Brothers, and himself became one of their congregation. Afterward he was chosen to dwell in the new House that had been built for a congregation of Clerks by Meynold of Windesem, a rich citizen of Zwolle, and after a while was instituted as Rector of the same House, being held worthy of that office by his Elders. He was one of great stature and innocency of life. In word kindly, in counsel wise, in bearing composed; to the poor compassionate, to strangers courteous, and the citizens loved him; moreover, he burned fervently with divine love to gain the souls of many. He was a zealous follower of Florentius, whom he esteemed with all his heart and loved as his dearest Father; likewise he left behind him many devout Brothers whom he had built up to the highest virtues. He was buried in our monastery at Windesem, and Theodoric Herxen, his disciple, succeeded him as Rector.

CHAPTER XVII

Of the death of Henry of Gouda, a devout Priest, at Zwolle

IN the year of the Lord 1410, on the day of St. Gregory the Pope, Henry of Gouda died at Zwolle. He was a devout Priest and Confessor to the Sisters in that place, having been of old one of the disciples of Florentius, and he was born in Holland near Schoonhoven. Being learned in the Scriptures he was a mighty preacher, and one that did truly despise the world and its riches; he feared not to reprove the vices of sinners, and in his frequent preaching he strove for the salvation of his neighbours; moreover, he kept a strict watch over his own conscience, and guarded his good reputation and humility of life. On a time, as he was passing through the street in a city that is far away, some boys whom he knew not seized him from behind by his cloak, and mocked him with jests because it was his wont to go clad in very simple attire, and a long sad-coloured cloak, for he seemed to take no thought of any outward thing, nor to desire honour. So being thus entreated and disturbed he looked back and said to himself: “Here ought we to dwell, for at Zwolle they say unto us, ‘Sir, sir,’ yet what merit do we gain thereby?”

Likewise he came sometimes to Mount St. Agnes, and sought to speak with the Brothers in their cells, and as he was holding converse with a certain one of them, he said, amongst many other good things, “Very good is the life that ye pass here, and the more safe is the road that ye traverse in that ye abide in the cloister afar from the multitude of men. I, who almost every day do traffick with worldlings, what can I learn thereby save the acts of worldly men? I am a man untaught, neither have I knowledge of the life of contemplation, nor do I seek to take hold on lofty matters—but

sometimes I can preach in simple words to untaught and common folk—yet henceforth I purpose to amend myself with more diligence, and by God’s favour to apply myself to things of greater moment.” When he said this, that Brother was greatly edified at the humble words that proceeded from his mouth. It is said also in his preaching he uttered this notable saying: “Why should I say more? Words do beget a multitude of words—and acts beget their kind. The fruit of the Word is its fulfilment in deed.”

He was buried in the church at Windesem, where also certain other devout Brothers and Priests do sleep, and after him John Haerlem was preferred to rule over the Sisters in Zwolle, since the well-being of the House so determined it; he was one that was sufficiently skilled in sacred learning, and he had lived long and devotedly in Deventer, and moreover had ruled the House of Florentius for several years.

CHAPTER XVIII

How the Sisters in Bronope were invested

IN the year of the Lord 1411, on the day of the Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Sisters of the Order of Canons Regular in Bronope were first invested. This House lieth outside the town of Campen, which town is near the bank of the Yssel where that river runneth down to the sea. This investiture, with indelible and perpetual vows to live the life of the cloister, was conferred by the Reverend Fathers and the Priors of our Order, namely, John Vos of Huesden, Prior of Windesem, and William Vorniken of Utrecht, Prior of Mount St. Agnes near Zwolle. To these the care and visitation of the House, and likewise of the House at Diepenvene that lieth without Deventer, were afterward committed by the General Chapter. But the number of these Sisters who were first invested in this place was fourteen, of whom ten became nuns, and four Converts; and of the ten nuns four did make their profession on the same day; the other six, and the four Converts remained for a year as Novices.

In the year of the Lord 1412, a General Chapter was holden and the houses of the nuns at Diepenvene and Bronope were incorporated as members of the said Chapter.

CHAPTER XIX

The death of Wermbold the Priest

IN the year of the Lord 1413, on the Vigil of Pentecost, being the night of the Festival of Barnabas the Apostle, and at the eleventh hour, died Wermbold, a devout Priest of laudable life who was Confessor to the Sisters of the third Order in the House of St. Caecilia. He came from Holland, from a place near Gouda, and for long had stood as a burning and shining light in the city of Utrecht, enkindling many by the word of his preaching and drawing them to the path of right living by his good example and his wholesome counsel; for he was a zealous lover of the holy Scriptures, and an eloquent preacher to the people, one well beloved for his eminent continency of life, and honoured by great folk. He procured that divers books of sacred theology should be written, and translated divers sayings of the Saints into the Teutonic tongue so as to profit the faithful Lay folk who were earnestly desirous to hear the Word of God. At length, when his pious labours in the service of God had been fulfilled with many trials, the good Lord of His great kindness favoured Wermbold with a most sweet consolation in a vision that was revealed to him. His body was taken for reverent burial to the choir of the Church of St. Caecilia, and the last words he spake as life departed were: “For Thou Lord only hast set me in hope.”

CHAPTER XX

Of the death of John Cele, Rector of the School at Zwolle

IN the year of the Lord 1417, on the ninth day of May, which in that year was the fourth Sunday after Easter, the reverend Master John Cele died at Zwolle in the diocese of Utrecht.

He had ruled the scholars there strictly, being an excellent instructor of youth, a zealous lover of the divine Name, and one that closely attended the choral and other offices of the Church and taught others so. This most faithful man, eminent for his honest life, ruled the school for many years, and with discernment taught many of his pupils to love holy religion and the following after God. What Order that is illustrious for its life or reputation hath not had monks that were his pupils? Although above others the Canons Regular, the Cruciferi, and the Cistercians have gained many adherents to the Order from among his students, and of these some, being endued with the grace of virtue, have become fathers of monasteries and rectors of churches. For the pupils who were under his rule learned from their good Master to despise for Christ's sake the glory of this world that vanisheth away, and that in the whirlpool of this mortal life nothing is better and holier than to spurn the enticements of the world and to fight for the Lord of Heaven. In his days it was a lovely thing to enter the town of Zwolle and to see the chosen multitude of scholars that did attend the school. Who could tell in worthy wise with what fatherly care he strove to instruct all in learning and character, and to the leading of an upright life, and the holding of a good repute? For this purpose he often set before them and quoted the authority of the holy Scripture, and strongly encouraged them to copy sentences from, the writings of the Saints. Furthermore, he

gave them regular instruction in singing, taught them to attend the church assiduously, to honour Priests, to love religion, to hold converse with devout and learned men, to pray yet more often, and gladly to take their part in singing the praises of God. He himself was there present with cheerful countenance, directing the whole choir in their harmonious melody; and likewise on feast days he often played on the organ, rejoicing greatly in this task, and being herein a true imitator of David, that holy king who played upon the harp and danced before the ark of God, singing His praises. In process of time the fame of John Cele's goodness went forth to the utmost parts of Germany, and his sayings and opinions reached to the ends of the earth, borne thither on the lips of his pupils. The men of Brabant with the Flemings, they of Holland with the Frisians, they of Westphalia with the Saxons came in crowds to study under him, and having borne themselves studiously in the school, returned with their learning to their native places, men of Treves and Cologne, Liege and Utrecht, Kleef and Geldria were found here; and youths that were apt for learning gathered together from other villages and castles and made great progress in knowledge. The richer paid their own expenses out of their sufficiency, the poor gathered in bands to beg, giving thanks to the hands that helped them. These did the Master instruct gladly and without price when besought so to do for God's sake, for he was a true father of the needy, and he exhorted them to strive to turn their studies to God's service; but wandering and froward fellows he would not admit nor endure, but either by correction changed them to a better mind or drove them forth from his presence, lest the naughtiness of such presumptuous persons might work ill to them that were well disposed to obey, and disturb the peace of the studious flock and their Rector. So he was a rod of fear to the idle, but a staff of protection and safety to them that were well disposed to learn. Many of his hearers, when they had laid fitting foundation of knowledge, flew higher to loftier studies, and those who bore them diligently were promoted to the degree of Masters in a short while, and certain of these applying themselves to yet fuller knowledge were found worthy to be counted in the number of the Doctors.

The great city of Paris doth know, holy Cologne and Erfurt do confess, and the Curia at Rome is not ignorant of this, namely, the number of learned men whom the school of Zwolle sent forth while Master John Cele ruled her with all diligence, which thing he continued for a great while, even until

his hair grew white, for they say that this venerable Master governed the scholars here for more than forty years.

This is his great glory, that so vast a multitude of his scholars speak well of him, so many illustrious Clerks praise him, so devout a company of monks still remember his name.

All things were well at Zwolle beneath his rule; they of the world were not at enmity with the scholars, the devout might serve God freely where they would, the Religious were under good supervision, and Priests of honest life were accepted of the citizens.

They who governed the people feared God and were endowed with wisdom and riches; moreover, amongst them were many learned magistrates who had been of old disciples of John, and as was fitting, they ever held him in love and reverence. He had collected many books for his own use, both of philosophy and divinity, and he directed that after his death these should be distributed for pious uses; for some he left as a pious bequest, and for the good of his own soul, to churches, some to monasteries, and some to the poor. So this is that revered and justly praised Master John Cele, a native of the town of Zwolle, a man well taught, learned, not puffed up by knowledge, sober, chaste, humble, and devout.

Once he had gone to the country of Brabant with the venerable Master Gerard Groote to see face to face that man most dear to God, John Ruesbroeck, one that was illustrious for his life and doctrine, for he had known him from afar, since his fame was noised abroad, and this journey he made out of love for his devout and holy life. John Ruesbroeck received them both in fatherly wise, and after a few days they returned to their own habitation, greatly refreshed by the words of his mouth and by his living example. This is more fully set forth in the book of the life of that memorable Father. From this time forth the flame of brotherly love burned yet more vehemently in the heart of each, and, indeed, John Cele did wondrously love Gerard from the very beginning of his preaching, ever holding him dear, and a man of one heart with him in Christ, one that did treat well of the Word of God before the people, showed a pattern of life in his own conduct, and was very fervent in his zeal for souls. For this reason Master John bore the reproach of men and much evil speaking from the froward, who never fail so to entreat them that do well; and this befell him because he encouraged and praised the acts of the Master and the glorious

words of his preaching, yet was he not overcome by the snarls of envious folk, nor ceased greatly to extol Gerard, but before the magistrates and the people he spake freely on behalf of the Religious. To him did Gerard address certain friendly letters, and John, who loved the Master's words with all his heart, did collect the whole number of his epistles, because of his delight in reading them. Likewise he did often mention the venerable Master by name to his scholars, as one whom he knew well, and in his own pleasant voice did recount his deeds for an example to them. This is the end of the life of John, that faithful servant of Christ Jesus, to whom may God grant to enjoy the glory of heaven with all the saints. His body was buried at Windesem, in the ancient cloister, near the door of the church.

CHAPTER XXI

Concerning John Brinckerinck, a disciple of Master Gerard

IN the year of the Lord 1419, on the 26th of March, that is to say, on the day following the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, John Brinckerinck died at Deventer. He was a man beloved of God, a devout Priest and Rector, and Confessor to the Béguines in the House of Master Gerard Groote. He was born of good parents in the city of Zutphen, in Geldria, and in the years of his youth he began the devout life through the preaching of Master Gerard, for in a short while he became a disciple of the Master and was adorned with special grace; moreover, he heard many good things from him, and received from his mouth words of heavenly wisdom, for he oft held converse with him in the House, and yet more often without when they journeyed.

After Gerard's happy death, John was ordained to the priesthood, and when John de Gronde, the first Confessor of the Sisters at Deventer died, he ruled the said Sisterhood which Gerard had founded, being set up as the second Rector thereof, in which office he was a zealous minister, and he governed the Sisters in most excellent wise for many years, for God helped him. Sometimes he preached the Word of God in church to the people, and he drew many to the service of God as handmaids of Christ; and when the congregation of Sisters had begun to grow in merit and to increase daily in number, he began to build a monastery for the Nuns of the Order of Regulars outside the city of Deventer towards the north, a work done with great and daily labour, and he ruled the same most strictly with all diligence.

Through his example and his counsels, which promoted the salvation of many, a great number of other Houses for Nuns were begun in divers parts, of which some were under the discipline of the Canons Regular, while others professed the rule of the third Order and were incorporated therein.

His body was taken to his own monastery at Diepenvene, and there buried in the choir before the High Altar, and after his death John Hoef was preferred to be Rector of the Sisters in Deventer, but the care of the Nuns was committed to the Prior of Windesem.

CHAPTER XXII

Of the death of Gisbert Dou, Rector of the Sisters at Amsterdam

IN the year of the Lord 1420, on the day before the Feast of the Nativity of the glorious Virgin Mary, Gisbert Dou died in Holland. He was a Priest of reverend life and Rector and Confessor to many Sisters in Amsterdam, and he did also promote and found two monasteries for the Canons Regular. This man of God, from the beginning of his conversion, was very familiar with Gerard Groote, and his close friend, for he knew his inmost thoughts better than did any other mortal man, both the good thoughts and the bad alike, and whatever Gerard did in his life, for he was his Confessor and his most faithful confidant in those things which pertain to the examination of the conscience. He held with him, therefore, most devout colloquies, frequently conferring with him as to the condition of the Brothers or Sisters, and the things needful to preserve the devotion which had begun in many places. But through the bounty of God he lived safely for many years to comfort the good, and he often preached the Word of God publicly in the church to the people. He was kindly and liberal in hospitality to all who came to him, a faithful helper of the poor, a sweet comforter to the sad, a staunch friend to the Religious. The mighty looked favourably upon him, the simple folk and the community loved him, and learned men and prelates heard him reverently; and so having fulfilled seventy-five years of life, he died in a good old age amongst the Fathers of his House, and was buried in the Convent of the Sisters of our Order.

In the year of the Lord 1450, Peter de Mera, Chamberlain to our Lord Eugenius IV, obtained a letter granting Indulgence to our House, namely, to

the Prior, the Brothers, the Converts, the Donates, and the Oblates in the House on Mount St. Agnes; and the purport of his letter was as followeth:

“Most blessed Father and most holy Lord, This petition is made to further the salvation of the souls of your devout servants Theodoric the Prior, the Canons or Brothers, and the other members of the community who dwell in the Monastery on Mount St. Agnes, near Zwolle, following the rule of the Order of Canons Regular, which monastery is in the diocese of Utrecht: likewise on behalf of the servants of this same House, and of other Priors, Canons, Brothers, members of the community, and servants, who shall dwell from time to time in the aforesaid monastery; wherefore that in future they may be ordered in more wholesome wise we beseech your holiness to deign of your grace to grant them Indulgence to the effect following, namely, that as long as they continue in the verity of the faith, the unity of the Holy Roman Church, in obedience and in devotion to your holiness and your successors, the Chief Pontiffs of the Holy Roman Church, who shall be canonically elected, so long a suitable Confessor chosen by them shall have power under the authority of the Apostolic See to grant to them when in articulo mortis full remission of all sin which they may have confessed with contrition of heart. Provided always that they presume not to do any unlawful thing through their reliance upon this Indulgence, and provided also that so soon as they are notified of this Indulgence they keep fast on every Friday for one whole year, or do some other act of piety: but if they have neglected to fast or been unable to do so, or if it hath been their custom heretofore so to fast on every Friday, then they shall be bound to perform some other special act of grace in accordance with the directions of the aforesaid Confessor.”

“The privilege desired in this petition is granted to all professed Brothers, Converts, and Oblates, under perpetual vows, so long as they live in the observance of the rule.”

“Given in the presence of our Lord the Pope,”

“C. ARMINIENSIS.”

“It is asked also that the aforesaid licence hold good without letters Apostolic to confirm the same.”

“Granted. C. ARMINIENSIS.”

CHAPTER XXIII

As to the gaining of Indulgences at the stations in Rome

GO the venerable and devout Priors at Windesem and Mount St. Agnes near Zwolle, and to the Priests and Fathers unfeignedly beloved in Christ Jesus, these, from Brother Everard Swane of the House of the Blessed Virgin in the Wood near Northorn, your unprofitable servant, good Fathers. Venerable Fathers, most beloved in Christ Jesus, my love is ever ready to serve you, and I was desired by divers persons, yea, and besought, as I understood, by some of your Brothers also, to write to the Curia to enquire as to the virtue and extent of the Indulgences granted at certain stations in Rome by our most Holy Father Pope Eugenius IV, the granting of which Indulgences was promoted by my Lord the Cardinal as ye do know. I was required to ask the virtue of such, and how they might be obtained; this thing, therefore, I did long since, and I have received a reply to this effect, namely: “That no man may know fully the virtue and extent of these. Indulgences, because from the time of St. Peter onward, Indulgences beyond number have been given and granted by divers Pontiffs.”

I have spoken likewise on this matter with certain persons that are about the Court, and to put the matter shortly, these also are unable to give any certain decision in the matter, but, arguing it amongst themselves, some said that the remission of all sins may be obtained at any station; others held and said that all Indulgences granted throughout the whole city may be obtained at any one of the stations. Which is the truer argument I dare not to say, beloved Fathers, but this I know full well of mine own knowledge and experience, that Cardinals, Prelates, and others, both men and women, throughout the whole city, are wont to be zealous in visiting each several

station; neither is it the usage there to make any reference to the virtue or extent of the Indulgences, even inwardly, but every man doth commit this matter to God Who alone doth know the tale of the same, and we too ought to follow this custom. But as concerning the gaining of the same, of which I have made mention above, the Chamberlain of my Lord Bologna, who returned to this country a short while ago for divers purposes, hath told me thereof by word of mouth, and he saith that he himself was present when the Indulgences were granted. Every man that hath made his confession and is contrite, and hath fulfilled the conditions laid down in the letter wherein the Indulgence was granted—that is, living in common and in the observance of the rule—may gain the same in the church of his own monastery. And these conditions are that he enter the church with the same intention that he would have in Rome were he present there on the proper days for visiting the stations; that he prostrate himself before the altar which he would have chosen there, and pour forth his prayers or certain repetitions of the Pater Noster as devoutly as he may: that he celebrate Mass: or visit the several altars saying the Pater Noster or other prayers after the same manner as that which is customary in the aforesaid city. In short, if any man doth as is aforesaid, there is sure hope that he will gain the Indulgences just as if he were actually present in Rome, as is set forth also in the said letter. Therefore, beloved Fathers, ye may, if it please you, tell these things to the Brothers of your House, or to any others ye will that desire to be informed as to the matters set forth above, and in this do as may seem expedient to you. As for our Lord Eugenius the Pope, aforementioned, who hath granted and given us Indulgences so freely, and my Lord of Bologna who procured the grant, and others who have laboured in what manner soever to this same end, ye will (as they do trust) make mention of them in your prayers, especially on the days proper for the stations, committing them to God for the sake of Jesus the humble. And may He see fit to keep you, and all that are committed to your charge, safe in His holy service.

Written on the day following the Feast of St. Philip and St. James, in the year of the Lord 1443.

CHAPTER XXIV

The letter of the Cardinal of Bologna

ANTONY, by the mercy of God Bishop of Ostia, Cardinal of the Holy Roman Church, and commonly known as the Cardinal of Bologna, to all and each of the Canons Regular, our beloved in Christ, and to all other persons that are Converts or Lay Brothers in the House of the Blessed Virgin in the Wood, and in the Houses elsewhere that belong to the said Order of St. Augustine in whatever diocese they may be, and who live in the observance of the rule, and to others who shall see these presents, greeting:

It is a just thing, and one consonant with reason, to bear witness to the truth; wherefore by the tenor of these presents we do notify your whole society, and bear witness that our most holy Father and Lord Eugenius IV, by divine providence Pope, by his Apostolic authority hath granted to each and all of you Indulgence and Concession following at my prayer and instance, the same being delivered by word of mouth and needing no further confirmation by letters Apostolic. Ye are not bound in any way whatever to avoid any man, even though he be for the time being held under sentence of excommunication, either at the time of the celebration of the divine Mysteries or at other seasons (unless indeed there be any in your churches that are publicly denounced as excommunicate), nor shall such intercourse be held to impute guilt to you or to any one of your company. Likewise and by similar authority he doth grant to you, that those among you that for the time being do suffer infirmities in the body be not bound to say or recite the Canonical Hours during the time of such infirmity, nor be deemed to be under such compulsion so that they be excused by the counsel of such suitable Confessors as may be chosen from your body.

Likewise that each Prelate of your several churches shall have authority with regard to vows to make pilgrimage across the seas, to the shrine of the Blessed Peter and Paul, or other places of pilgrimage which ought to be paid by you, or any one of you, from time to time, to commute the same to other acts of piety.

Furthermore and by the authority aforesaid he doth grant to the followers of your devotion this concession:

Whereas Indulgences have been granted by the Apostolic See to faithful persons all and sundry who from year to year devoutly visit certain churches in the which “stations” are appointed for certain days—and of these churches some are within, and some without the city—and whereas these Indulgences are granted to persons who visit the said churches on the days for which stations for this purpose are appointed;

Now therefore he doth grant that each and all of you, being truly penitent and having made confession, may and ought to enjoy the benefits of such Indulgences just as if ye had actually and in person visited the churches aforesaid.

And this concession shall avail both for the present and time to come for ever, so that it hold good for those of you only who shall continue to live in common, and in your own community (that is under the General Chapter), and shall persevere in the observance of the said rule.

A LETTER CONCERNING THE FIRST INSTITUTION OF THE MONASTERY AT WINDESEM

HERE beginneth the preface to the work following: with the whole affection of my heart and mind, and with the service of my voice do I exalt God, the Invisible, the Almighty, and His only begotten son our Lord Jesus Christ.

I. Preface

My most beloved Brother of old, when I told the tale of the former state of this House, of the Fathers and Brothers thereof, and their blessed deeds, and when I related also the origin of this foundation, thou didst seem to lend an ear somewhat readily thereto. Furthermore, thou didst make request that some memorial thereof should be committed to writing (for so it seemed good to thee), because they who saw and knew the former members of the House and the fervour of their lives, are now almost all dead; and I am as it were the dregs of the cup, the very last of all; and being already worn with age, it is like that I shall not be suffered to abide long with thee. For this cause thou dost affirm that it should be profitless and wasteful that by the lapse of time things that might perchance serve as an example and tend to the edification of some, should pass over to forgetfulness.

Wherefore I have fulfilled thy petition, though mayhap not thy full desire, since my manner of writing is coarse and ill-kempt; for which reason I have made no mention of thy name, nor of my own; and this is of set purpose lest if this poor letter fall at any time into the hands of another, he might be offended on the very threshold and so not care to go forward any further.

II. The history of the origin of the New Devotion

Now in the days of old the land of the English did abound in men great and holy, by whose saintliness and doctrine (as saith the venerable Bede) that land was watered like the Paradise of the Lord; and so it was that certain rivulets of that water, through the mercy of God, flowed down to this our land to make it fruitful. For this country was up to that time truly parched and ill-tended, inasmuch as doing service to idols, and being ensnared in the errors of the heathen, it was held captive of the devil.

III. Of them by whom this land was turned to the Faith of Christ

As for the first and chief of these spiritual rivulets, namely that great man and true saint, Willebrord, we know the tale of how he appeared here by sure testimony. For in the time of Pepin, King of the Franks, and his son Charles the Great, and when 700 years more or less had elapsed since the birth of the Lord, Willebrord with eleven others did irrigate the said land with the waters of their holy preaching. Moreover, with the help of his companions he did busy himself with breaking up the ground with the ploughshare of discipline, yet not without much difficulty; and in a short space the task of spreading the faith did prosper wondrously beneath their hands; for God worked with them, and did confirm their words with signs following.

Of a truth how great a fervour of faith and devotion flourished in this our land under their guidance, and for a long while after their days, is shown to this day, not only by the testimony of the books which we have read, but also by those countless churches and monasteries which, as we see, were builded on every side where the temples of idols had been overthrown.

IV. A lamentation over the waning of the aforesaid fervour

But, fie upon it, this first fervour and regular observance of discipline did in process of time grow so lukewarm and feeble, that the outward framework thereof alone remained, and as for the fruitfulness of the truly spiritual life, the devil might seem to have said in the words of Esaias, “and with the sole of my feet have I dried up all the rivers of defence.”

A certain aged man and an honoured priest spake in my hearing of this drouth and failure of devotion, and referring to the time of which I tell, he said that in the days of his youth and in these parts of the Low Countries, all

things pertaining to devotion and charity were so brought to nothingness, that if any were touched inwardly by a desire to amend his life, he would scarce find one single man from whom to ask counsel; nor scarce one spot where he could put these fledgling desires into a place of safety, unless it were among the Carthusians; for amongst them Religious observance and the vigour of spiritual life did flourish at that time, but scarce amongst any others.

V. Of the rise of the New Devotion in our land

Since, therefore, there was such drouth throughout the whole land (as hath been said before) that there seemed to be no trace anywhere of the ancient devotion, the good Lord looked down from Heaven upon the earth with the eye of His mercy, and made rise a little fount in these failing days and in our land that was desert, pathless, and unwatered; which fount grew by little and little to be a river (as is said in the Book of Esther), and after a while into much water to irrigate not trees that are corruptible, but souls, which truly are the plants of that garden which is of the Spirit and faileth not.

VI. Of Master Gherard Groet

Master Gherard Groet was this memorable fount, and not unworthily is he thus typified, having been small in his lowly esteem and abnegation of himself, but as his name doth signify, in the sight of God mighty to overthrow by the sword of this word of the Lord the foes that rise up against the salvation of His elect, so that he and his beloved sons might gain the inheritance of Israel. One may say fitly enough of this man what St. Augustine saith of Paulinus, who from being very rich became for God's sake very poor and yet with full store of holiness.

Moreover, like Anah, he found the hot springs in the desert, namely, the sweetness of divine love beyond common measure, together with abundant zeal to gain souls, and an hatred of wickedness.

Having these things before his eyes he spared not while he lived either toil or cost, for he went about preaching everywhere in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness.

VII. Of his death

At length after much strife, and having converted many to Christ, this most blessed Father passed happily to the Lord in the year of the Lord 1384; and he left the residue of the work, of which he himself had done enough, to his little ones, those whom he had gathered under his wings that they might promote the salvation of many and be their pattern, whom also he had nurtured with the milk of his goodness and his sweet-savoured doctrine; for it was his intention that through them should be finished that work which he had ever in mind, and had striven to carry into effect so far as he could; namely, to snatch souls from the jaws of the devil and restore them to their Maker. This work his followers in their time were not backward to do, neither have their successors to the present day ceased to fulfil the same task.

VIII. Concerning Florentius and his companions

Of these primitive disciples of Master Gherard, the first and chief was that Florentius, son of Radewin, who was wonderful in all holiness and honesty of character, and whose name that House, which was the first of all the congregations of Clerks only, doth still retain. In like manner one House at Deventer still hath its name from Gherard Groet, because it was the House wherein he dwelt, and afterward this was the first of all the congregations of women. This Florentius with his companions that were men of light, and whose names and deeds are of record, made no small gain of souls for the Lord, especially amongst the scholars that were Clerks, and by their labours the monasteries of divers orders were propped up in no slight degree and reformed also, the Lord working by their means.

IX. How like things were done in other cities

Florentius seeing that this was good, and that indeed no sacrifice could be more acceptable to God than zeal for souls, sent devout and learned men to other cities also to do a like work, especially to places where there were schools largely attended, such as Zwolle, Doesborch, Herderwijn and the like; and these men lived a common life like that in the congregation already founded, and gained their livelihood by writing books. They studied most of all to draw to Christ such scholars as were Clerks, and when they were so drawn and converted, to send them to the several monasteries and

congregations, there to serve the Lord. Moreover, the conversion of these and their conversation was a cause and means of salvation to many, as we found out afterward in the case of divers of them. So much of their calling Clerks to Christ.

X. Of the names of the Fathers and Rectors of the first congregations

Furthermore, with regard to the Fathers of the former congregations (to go back a little to my former subject), I, in the hearing of Christ Jesus, without whom nothing can be begun or founded duly, do say as followeth:

“Through what act of grace or miracle came it to pass that as Master Gherard Groet was preaching and sowing the seed everywhere, there were added to him so suddenly and unexpectedly men of such kind and so great, for these were of one mind with him, and every one of them in each city and place burned with the zeal with which he also burned to exhort and convert a people that was stiff necked.” Yet with all diligence they set them to the task of gathering together virgins as pearls from the shells and most pure lilies from the thorns. These were in their days true bridesmen and friends of the bridegroom, who hear and rejoice because of the bridegroom’s voice: who strove with emulation in God’s behalf to present the whole body of plighted virgins whom they had gathered together as one chaste virgin to one husband, even to Christ.

Thou dost ask, perhaps, “Who are they whom thou dost so commend, and what are their names?” Hear then:

In Deventer, John Brinckerinck ruled over the virgins that were first gathered together there, and from these in after days sprang the House at Dyepenween, which was under the same Rector.

In Zutphen was Henry of Huesden; in Doesborch, Tric Gruter; in Zwolle, Henry of Gouda; in Kampen, Tric of Gramsberch; in Utrecht, Werembold. In Amersfoort, William son of Henry; in Leyden, Peter of Poel; in Harlem, Hugo Goltsmit; in Amsterdam, Ghijsbert of Oude; in Horn, Paul of Medenblic. Likewise in Enchusen, Paul of that city; in Pormereynde, Nicolas of that city; in Almelo, Everard of Eza; likewise in Schutdorp, Henry of that city. These are the holy men whom the Lord chose with love unfeigned to carry on and complete His work which Master Gherard Groet had begun in wholesome wise by His inspiration, as hath been set forth

already. Holiness made them priests, learning made them doctors, diligence made them profitable rectors of many congregations, and zeal for the gaining of souls made them notable preachers as hath been found in the case of many of them. O happy day on which that great Gherard was born amongst us, for he was the fount and source whence flowed the waters of salvation to our land, so that what before his time had been parched became a pool, and the thirsty land, springs of water.

XI. Of the multiplication of the devout, especially of virgins

From this time forth the fount that once was small began to grow by means of the rivulets aforesaid into abundant waters, that is, monasteries without number and congregations also which fed them, so that it should seem that the saying in Exodus was fulfilled which saith of the sons of Israel how that when Joseph died his seed was multiplied exceedingly and filled the land. Thus it came to pass that the people, both men and women, loved a life of virginity, and in chastity emulated the dwellers in Heaven. But above all there was a vast band of women that were virgins who despised the thought of motherhood, and spurned this flowery world with contempt, ever showing by their thoughts, their deeds, and their bearing, that they desired rather to be united to that Spouse Who is in Heaven. What state is there to-day, what township or city in the whole province of Cologne but rejoiceth to have known the savour and scent of these same lilies? Yet was there diversity in their lots, for as Paul doth testify of himself, so too was it with them; some having a savour of life unto life, and some a savour of death unto death. But in this the matter of their election is most clearly shown, and likewise the fact that they were not of the world, because they ever bare the world's hatred and persecution, sometimes suffering at the hands of parents and kindred, sometimes from rulers and the common folk of the cities and towns, beneath which persecution they bore themselves with all patience and humility; yet they suffered most greatly from false teachers and preachers who were zealous to assail with mad words, and to persecute a manner of life that they knew not, yet did not they not prevail.

XII. How a certain monk of Cologne was put to confusion

For example, one such was preaching in Cologne at the time of the Prague heresy, and he said amongst other matter: “Ye do go to Prague to contend with heretics whom ye might find readily in your midst—even in St. Gereon’s Street”—by which he signified the Sisters of the congregation who dwelt in the said street. But the great ones of the city took the word very ill, saying that such a thing was never heard, namely, that heretics should dwell in the fair city of Cologne. But why should I say more? At length the matter was referred to the bishops and to the university, and, save that the monk had somewhat speedily sought refuge by flight, it would have conduced to his own detriment that he ever preached that word in Cologne.

XIII. How the Sisters were examined

Forthwith Master Henry de Gorinchem was sent to enquire into the charge of the false preacher aforesaid (for this Master Henry was held in the highest esteem among theologians at that time), and he did skilfully perform the task assigned to him, examining the affairs and condition of those Sisters with all diligence, and when he understood clearly their sincerity in the Faith; their obedience in all things to Holy Church; how that they had given up all personal property both in goods and in their own will; their chastity and how in all things they did imitate the Mother of Christ; their patience in watching, fasting, and in seeking to gain their whole sustenance by the labour of their hands, he was astonished thereat and returning to those who had sent him he spake openly, saying, “If this life be not that in which every Christian ought to follow Christ, then have I never read the Scriptures.” And from that time he bore such goodwill towards them, that very often he would help them in their suits, and likewise by his will he distributed notable gifts amongst them.

XIV. Concerning Master Bernard de Reyda

Next in order there was the disciple and successor of this doctor, namely, Master Bernard de Reyda, who may fittingly be reckoned amongst the most illustrious, and he ruled over the Sisters aforesaid until the present day, being also their Confessor and Fellow Commoner. But whither have we come? Verily it was our purpose, according to thy petition to say somewhat of the first members of our House at Windesem for thy delectation: but I do

confess I have been led further than I thought by my desire to bring forth into the light the names of the Fathers aforementioned who were well known to me, fearing lest in process of time they should be hidden altogether in the darkness of silence, which thing God forbid. But in the second place, the savour of these sweet-scented lilies that were now spread far and wide amid the monasteries and congregations, did compel me to bear some testimony as to their number and their most holy conversation, while the breath of life is yet whole in me. For unworthy though I be, I have conversed with them for these many years past, visiting and holding colloquies with them, and I have ever found them firm in the faith, and in deed effectual; wherefore let any man say what he will of them, but I say with Balaam: “Let me die the death of the Righteous, and let my last end be like theirs”—but let us return to the purpose whence we have wandered.

XV. Of the origin of the House at Windesem

So under Florentius and his companions there grew a great company of devout persons, both Clerks and Laics, who either wished to dwell with them or at least relied upon their wholesome admonition and counsel.

Amongst these were two men of no mean rank according to worldly dignity, sagacious in mind and sufficiently learned for their degree, namely Henry de Wilsen, a citizen of Kampen, and Goswin Tyasen, a citizen of Zwolle. These two, being prudent men and well skilled in worldly matters, were a strong stay to Florentius and his companions, and ever present helpers in all the work that the Lord had ordained should be done through them.

But when they saw how, that after the death of Master Gherard Groet of holy memory, the heavens continually dropped honey, and how that from the seed which Gherard had planted and the skies bedewed from above, many congregations of men and women began to spring up on every side, they rejoiced with exceeding joy; also they began to hold many colloquies amongst themselves, as to how this good beginning that had its wholesome origin from God might continue unshaken for a yet longer space to His glory, and the salvation of many souls.

They found by God’s inspiration that this might be done by the means following, that is to say, if a monastery of some approved order, but

preferably of the Canons Regular, should be founded, under whose shadow all the devout turtle-doves might have a secure refuge from the swoop of the falcon. But where might a place be found, and the other things also that were needful for the carrying out of such a work? For, as saith the Apostle of the calling of the primitive Church, so amongst these also there were not many rich, not many noble—save them that their virtue did make noble and them that voluntary poverty did make rich before God.

Wherefore these Converts prayed to the Lord with all their hearts, that He, without whom no good thing is begun, carried forward, or ended, might deign effectually to show them what might be His good pleasure in this business; and they remembered likewise that Master Gherard Groet ever kept the same purpose in mind, although he could not carry his desire into effect, for death was beforehand with him.

XVI. Concerning Brother Bertold, and the site of this monastery

The Lord therefore, that He might show how He was the cause and the beginner of all these things, stirred up the spirit of a young Clerk named Bertold ten Hove, who was the owner of broad meadows, and particularly of an estate that is called “Hof to Windesem”—where by God’s aid we now do dwell—and he, coming to Florentius and his company, did of his own act and free will offer to give himself and all his possessions into their hands for the service of God, and he desired earnestly that a monastery might be builded in the aforesaid place, if this might be done.

When they knew this, all betook them to praising God, reaching up their hands toward Heaven; for they held it as a most sure sign that He had heard their prayer, and had promised to be, by some means or other, the promoter of this cause. Straightway so many of them as were owners of houses or lands sold them and put the price into Florentius’ hands, or at least resigned the same for the use of the monastery that should be builded.

XVII. Of the goodwill and consent of Florentius the Lord Bishop

Forthwith they began to be instant with the venerable Lord Florentius of Wevelichoven, who was then Bishop of Utrecht, for his consent to the founding of a monastery, and for the privileges needful for this business;

and him they found most gracious in all things, for he had a special love of virtue.

This was done in the year of the Lord 1386, and by the co-operation of God (good men also reaching forth an hand to help them) the affair so prospered that in the year following, that is in 1387, on the day following the Feast of St. Gallus the Confessor, an humble church and burial-ground and also four altars were consecrated in due order by Hubert, the venerable Bishop of Yppuse, in honour of the. Holy Trinity, and the Blessed Virgin and others.

XVIII. Of the first Brothers of this monastery

But since it is written, “Not the people for the place’s sake, but the place for the people’s sake,” we must see who were the first to dwell here; since indeed these were the founders and the pattern of all who did afterwards come under the Chapter of Windesem.

In the first place there was Henry of Uxaria, at that time the only priest amongst them, and he was appointed Rector by the Bishop, by whose commission the said Henry received the Religious habit from the suffragan.

Next there was Henry de Wilsen and Goswin Tyasen, who were invested as Clerks, that did devote themselves, for they would not be promoted to holy orders by reason of a stain that did unfit them under the rule. Also there were these following: Brother John of Huesden, Brother Henry Wilde, Brother Werner Keen-camp, Brother Bertold ten Hove, Brother John Kempis, and Brother Henry Balveren. All these were sons and disciples of Florentius, from whose breast they sucked in abundance the milk of all goodness, which same they poured forth without stint for their posterity in after days.

These men and certain others of the community, whose will was good thereto, were marked out by Florentius to build the monastery in the place aforesaid, and to take the habit of Holy Religion therein to the Glory of Christ; which task they were forward to fulfil with wisdom and all speed; also to the men above named there were added, a short space afterward, certain persons of like intention and fervour, namely, John Otto of Zoes, Henry Loder, Arnold of Kalkar, Gherard of Naeldwije, John of Broechusen, and others.

XIX. The praise of the early Fathers

O Windesem, these are they by whom thy first foundations were laid, through whom was kindled that bright light, namely, the rule of the truly Regular life; so that thou who wast then as a grain of mustard seed, the least of all herbs, wast enabled to grow into a great tree, beneath the shadow of whose branches fowls of heaven, without number, might take their pleasant rest.

XX. How the Brothers aforesaid were promoted in other monasteries

At last when many houses that sprung from the same stock had been founded on all sides, both for men and women, there was scarce one of them but desired that a pastor might be provided from amongst the aforesaid Brothers of Windesem.

This we did see with our own eyes and hear in after days, how Brother Henry of Uxaria was appointed by the Bishops to be the first Rector of this House, which office he held for but a short time; then we did see Brother John of Huesden, a young man in years but hoary in mind, who ruled this church of ours for above thirty-three years in wholesome wise, to the great increase of our goods, both spiritual and temporal, and was beloved of God and man. When he died Brother Gherard Naeldwijn was chosen by all the Brothers to take the place of the departed Prior, yet scarce for half a year could he bear the honour and burden of this care by reason of his exceeding lowliness, but he renounced the office of Prior and cast off the burden thereof in presence of all the Brothers, though this was contrary to the opinion of the whole community, and likewise to that of the Fathers gathered together in the Chapter.

Likewise we have seen how Henry Wilde was chosen to be Prior at Eemsteyn, Brother Werner at Horn, Brother John Kempis at Mount St. Agnes, Brother Arnold Kalkar at the Fount of the Blessed Mary, Brother John Otto at Amsterdam, Brother Henry Loder at Northorn, Brother John Broechusen at Leerdorp, and so forth.

XXI. Of the pattern of virtue left for us by the Fathers

And now, in the last place, one must see how virtuous were these men, and what an example they left for us to imitate. But no one amongst men knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of a man which is in him; yet by considering his outward deeds one may guess what lieth hidden inwardly in him.

XXII. Of their simplicity and poverty

One may know by the humble plan of the former House which they builded how greatly these men loved simplicity and holy poverty. For the inner walls thereof were small, and the House was covered in with reeds or thatch; so at that time what is now the part behind the church was the whole church itself; and the chapel that is now was then the refectory; the brewery was the kitchen, and the old brewery was our mill house and infirmary. Moreover, the bounds of the monastery were so narrow that the present inner wall on the north of the barn was then the extreme outer wall of the House. So the whole was lowly and small, being arranged to receive but few inmates.

XXIII. Of their Victual

They kept a frugal and poor table, not so much of necessity, or through lack, as out of love of poverty, and the habit which was implanted in them, which same they had acquired together with the disciples of Florentius.

So on a time I heard Brother Gherard Naeldwije say in pleasantry that in those times on fast days they would sometimes divide one fig into four or six portions that so the great quantity of the bread they consumed might be seasoned by those fragments. On a time also there come to us, I know not whence, half a jar of salted salmon, and as the Brothers were doubting what should be done therewith, Brother Henry de Wilsen, being ever greatly zealous for discipline, persuaded them that by all means it ought to be sold lest such new and unaccustomed dainties should begin to be brought in.

At this time they had no flocks of sheep, nor any fishery, nor fishers, but so piously and soberly did they live that Gherard of Bronchorst, a Canon of St. Saviour's, who once sojourned for a while with the Brothers at Windesem, was wont to say in his own pleasant manner, "None fare sumptuously in Windesem unless it be the swine and the guests." So also to

drink wine and eat roast fowls were held in Windesem to be matters that should be referred to the Bishop.

XXIV. Of their Vesture

Their vesture and their utensils were notable examples of their true lowliness and simplicity, so that I remember to have seen those venerable elders, Brother Henry of Uxaria and Brother Henry de Wilsen, wearing garments that were altogether worn through by constantly rubbing against the seats as they leaned back, and these were botched about the elbows with great patches of rough cloth. But if men of their quality wore such vesture what wonder if the younger men in those days were not more freakish than they in the matter of clothing?

Indeed, I lie if I have not seen some of our household that were Laics wearing sad-coloured garments made of bark fibre, in providing which and like garments also Brother Henry Balveren, the Vestiarius, showed great zeal, as did the tailor, Brother Herbort, a Convert who was formerly a disciple of Gherard Groet.

They had likewise certain hair shirts which were lent from time to time to divers of the younger Brothers for the taming of their vices and concupiscence, and one of these was as rough as those hair cloths with which the brewers' cauldrons are wont to be dried.

XXV. How they avoided all occasion of scandal

One may see how greatly they preferred their own good report and the edification of all men before all worldly good, by this tale; namely, that on a time two young men of Deventer came to Windesem, of whom one was called Goswin Comhaer (a man who was afterward a great example), but the other was Conrad Mom. These earnestly sought to be received here, but the members of the House made answer saying that in this region there would be too much talk if this were done, and if they remained in this place, for their parents dwelt hard by: let them rather go to Eemsteyn. And receiving this reply the men took it ill enough, so that I heard one of them exclaim in a sad voice: "May God pity us in that we cannot obtain or know any place of rest for this cause, namely, that we are rich." "And they went obediently to Eemsteyn."

XXVI. Of their Charity

These men also were wondrous charitably disposed toward all that did lack, especially toward new Houses of our own order that were begun in poverty. These they desired to help to an extent even beyond their power, by transferring to them both goods and men, as is manifest not only in the matter of the two youths aforementioned, but also in the case of divers others that were rich and desired to dwell with them. These they did often direct to other monasteries to relieve their needs, for they sought not what might be profitable to themselves, but rather what should be so to others. Thus they sent Arnold Droem to Mount St. Agnes, Stephen Wael to the Valley of Peace, and Brother Nicholas Bochorst to Nazareth, and so forth.

In like manner it was agreed by the community with regard to Brother John ten Water that he should be sent to the Fount of the Blessed Mary where there seemed to be notable scarcity; yet by his lowliness and his great importunity that he should by no means be parted from the Brothers, he did overcome this resolution.

But the well spring of their goodness ceased not with these, rather it did flow forth and reach all men, especially poor Clerks and members of the Houses of the New Devotion. What man did ever return from them empty-handed? for if the petitioner were rich, he brought back counsel, if he were poor he received help.

XXVII. Concerning Gherard of Renen

There was in those days, that is, amongst the first Fathers, a man of great age, who was by no means the least of his own folk, and his name was Gherard of Renen. He would sojourn for long spaces of time with the Brothers at Windesem, for he was bound to them by an exceeding love: and being on a time in the House at Utrecht wherein I dwelt, and in the presence of a certain honourable matron who was his kinswoman, he began to speak of the aforesaid Brothers, their manner of life and their virtues, and I myself was there present also. So then this woman was suddenly kindled to so great fervour by the things that she had heard that she suddenly burst forth with these words: "Ah, if I were a man, and mine own master, no one should hinder me from going to such a community." And I verily believe

that until this man told his tale I myself had never heard mention of Windesem.

XXVIII. Of the privileges obtained for the binding together of the Chapters

After a short while it came to pass that three daughters were born to the House at Windesem, namely Eemsteyn, the House of the Blessed Virgin, and the House of the New Light near Horn. And when in this manner the number of the monasteries had grown to four, by the advice of Florentius and the other Fathers aforenamed, they sent to the Curia at Rome in the time of Boniface the Pope, who granted them leave to gather together a General Chapter together with authority and fitting privileges and so forth; for up to this time they had agreed to remain directly under the rule of the Bishop. Gherard of Bronchorst, who hath been named above, did take upon him this mission with all devotion, but Reyner Minnenbode, the founder of the monastery at Eemsteyn paid, as it is said, all the expenses thereof in most liberal wise.

XXIX. Of their manner of holding the Chapter

But when the Fathers and Brothers of these four Houses held a Chapter in their humble fashion, the Fathers of the congregations whose names are given above would come together, or at least some of them, and sit them down to deal with matters concerning not the acquiring of worldly wealth, but the conversion of souls and the maintenance of the common good. And at that time all were as it were one fold and one flock, and in very deed one body in Christ.

XXX. The Conclusion

What sayest thou to these things now, Brother most beloved, remembering that thou wast a wild olive, and meet for eternal fire, and seeing that thou art now grafted, in despite of nature, on this fair and fruitful olive tree, and art become a partaker in its fatness? Canst thou do aught save proclaim with the whole inward love of thine heart, “Great is thy mercy to me, O Lord, and Thou hast snatched my soul from the nethermost Hell”? For it is written of Catho that he would praise his gods mightily—he being but an heathen—

and extol his own good fortune, in that it had been permitted to him to be born in that land, and at that time when he could see Rome and her Empire flourishing in the height of their prosperity; and if this is true, Brother most beloved, what return wilt thou make to the Lord thy God for that it was given thee to be born and to live in this time of His Most abundant Goodness, and in a land which He, the Lord, hath blessed? Hadst thou lived in the days of thy fathers, before our land was illumined by the light of Grace of which so much hath been said already, what else could have befallen but that thou shouldest have done even as they did? From which it doth follow that thou also wouldest have gone even whither they went, there to abide for ever.

O happy days in which were born the leaders and chiefs of this new army of ours, I mean Gherard Groet and Florentius, and their son's sons also, and they that are born from them continually! and so it shall continue to the end of time. Amen. May the Mother of Grace grant thee to follow their footsteps and to hold fast their doctrine.

Here endeth the letter concerning the first institutors of the monastery at Windesem, which letter was written by the venerable Father William Voern.

THE FOLLOWING OF CHRIST

THOMAS A KEMPIS

E-BOOK ALSO AVAILABLE IN PAPERBACK.

BY THOMAS À KEMPIS ; A NEW TRANSLATION FROM THE ORIGINAL LATIN, TO
WHICH ARE ADDED PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS AND A PRAYER AT THE END OF EACH
CHAPTER ; EDITED BY J.M. LELEN.

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CONTENTS

THE FOLLOWING OF CHRIST

THE LIFE OF THOMAS A KEMPIS

BOOK I

CHAPTER 1

OF THE IMITATION OF CHRIST AND THE CONTEMPT OF THE WORLD

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 2

OF HAVING A HUMBLE OPINION OF ONE'S SELF

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 3

OF THE DOCTRINE OF TRUTH

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 4

OF PRUDENCE IN WHAT WE DO

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 5

OF READING THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 6

OF INORDINATE AFFECTIONS

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 7
OF AVOIDING ARROGANCE

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 8
OF TOO MUCH INTIMACY

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 9
OF OBEDIENCE AND SUBJECTION

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 10
OF SUPERFLUITY OF WORDS

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 11
OF ACQUIRING PEACE

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 12
OF THE ADVANTAGE OF ADVERSITY

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 13
OF RESISTING TEMPTATIONS

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 14
OF AVOIDING RASH JUDGMENT

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 15
OF WORKS DONE OUT OF CHARITY

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 16
OF BEARING THE DEFECTS OF OTHERS

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 17
OF THE MONASTIC LIFE

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 18
OF THE EXAMPLES OF THE HOLY FATHERS

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 19
OF THE EXERCISES OF A GOOD RELIGIOUS

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 20
OF THE LOVE OF SOLITUDE AND SILENCE

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 21
OF COMPUNCTION OF HEART

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 22
OF THE CONSIDERATION OF HUMAN MISERY

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 23
OF THE THOUGHTS OF DEATH

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 24
OF JUDGMENT AND THE PUNISHMENT OF SINNERS

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 25
OF THE FERVENT AMENDMENT OF OUR WHOLE LIFE

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

BOOK II

CHAPTER 1
OF INTERIOR CONVERSATION

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 2
OF HUMBLE SUBMISSION

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 3
OF THE GOOD PEACEABLE MAN

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 4
OF A PURE MIND AND A SIMPLE INTENTION

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 5
OF SELF-CONSIDERATION

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 6
OF THE JOY OF A GOOD CONSCIENCE

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 7
OF THE LOVE OF JESUS ABOVE ALL THINGS

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 8
OF FAMILIAR FRIENDSHIP WITH JESUS

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 9
OF THE WANT OF ALL CONSOLATION

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 10
OF GRATITUDE FOR THE GRACE OF GOD

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 11
OF THE SMALL NUMBER OF THE LOVERS OF THE CROSS OF JESUS

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 12
OF THE ROYAL ROAD OF THE HOLY CROSS

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

BOOK III

CHAPTER 1
OF THE INTERNAL DISCOURSE OF CHRIST TO A FAITHFUL SOUL

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 2
THAT TRUTH SPEAKETH WITHIN US WITHOUT NOISE OF WORDS

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 3
THE WORDS OF GOD ARE TO BE HEARD WITH HUMILITY, AND THAT MANY WEIGH THEM NOT

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 4
THAT WE OUGHT TO WALK BEFORE GOD IN TRUTH AND HUMILITY

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 5
OF THE WONDERFUL EFFECT OF DIVINE LOVE

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 6
OF THE PROOF OF A TRUE LOVER

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 7
OF CONCEALING GRACE UNDER THE GUARDIANSHIP OF HUMILITY

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 8
OF THE MEAN ESTIMATION OF ONE'S SELF IN THE EYES OF GOD

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 9
THAT ALL THINGS ARE TO BE REFERRED TO GOD, AS TO OUR LAST END

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 10
THAT IT IS SWEET TO DESPISE THE WORLD AND SERVE GOD

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 11
THAT THE DESIRES OF OUR HEART ARE TO BE EXAMINED AND MODERATED

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 12
OF ACQUIRING PATIENCE, AND OF STRIVING AGAINST CONCUPISCENCE

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 13
OF THE OBEDIENCE OF A HUMBLE SUBJECT, AND THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS CHRIST

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 14
OF CONSIDERING THE SECRET JUDGMENTS OF GOD, THAT WE NOT BE PUFFED UP WITH OUR OWN GOOD WORKS

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 15

HOW WE ARE TO BE DISPOSED, AND WHAT WE ARE TO SAY, WHEN WE DESIRE ANYTHING

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 16

THAT TRUE CONSOLATION IS TO BE SOUGHT IN GOD ALONE

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 17

THAT ALL SOLICITUDE MUST BE PLACED IN GOD

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 18

THAT TEMPORAL MISERIES ARE TO BE BORNE WITH EQUANIMITY, AFTER THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 19

OF SUPPORTING INJURIES; AND WHO IS PROVED TO BE TRULY PATIENT

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 20

OF THE CONFESSION OF OUR OWN INFIRMITY, AND OF THE MISERIES OF THIS LIFE

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 21

THAT WE ARE TO REST IN GOD ABOVE ALL GOODS AND GIFTS

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 22

ON THE REMEMBRANCE OF THE MANIFOLD BENEFITS OF GOD

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 23

OF FOUR THINGS WHICH BRING MUCH PEACE

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 24

OF AVOIDING CURIOUS INQUIRY RESPECTING THE LIFE OF OTHERS

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 25

IN WHAT FIRM PEACE OF THE HEART AND TRUE PROGRESS DOTH CONSIST

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 26

OF THE EXCELLENCE OF A FREE MIND, WHICH DEVOUT PRAYER RATHER
MERITETH THAN READING

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 27

THAT SELF-LOVE CHIEFLY KEEPETH US BACK FROM THE SOVEREIGN GOOD

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 28

AGAINST THE TONGUES OF DETRACTORS

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 29

HOW WHEN TRIBULATION PRESSETH, WE MUCH CALL UPON AND BLESS GOD

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 30

OF ASKING THE DIVINE ASSISTANCE, AND OF CONFIDENCE OF RECOVERING GRACE

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 31

OF THE CONTEMPT OF EVERYTHING CREATED, IN ORDER TO FIND THE CREATOR

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 32

OF SELF-ABNEGATION, AND THE RENUNCIATION OF ALL CUPIDITY

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 33

OF THE INCONSTANCY OF OUR HEART, AND OF DIRECTING OUR FINAL INTENTION TO GOD

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 34

THAT HE THAT LOVETH GOD RELISHETH HIM ABOVE ALL THINGS AND IN ALL THINGS

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 35

THAT THERE IS NO BEING SECURE FROM TEMPTATION IN THIS LIFE

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 36
AGAINST THE VAIN JUDGMENTS OF MAN

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 37
OF A PURE AND ENTIRE RESIGNATION OF OURSELVES FOR THE OBTAINING
FREEDOM OF HEART

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 38
OF THE GOOD GOVERNMENT OF OURSELVES IN OUTWARD THINGS, AND OF
HAVING RECOURSE TO GOD IN DANGERS

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 39
THAT A MAN MUST NOT BE TOO ANXIOUS ABOUT HIS AFFAIRS

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 40
THAT MAN HATH NO GOOD OF HIMSELF, AND THAT HE CANNOT GLORY IN
ANYTHING

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 41
OF THE CONTEMPT OF ALL TEMPORAL HONORS

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 42
THAT PEACE IS NOT TO BE PLACED IN MEN

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 43
AGAINST VAIN AND WORLDLY LEARNING

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 44
OF NOT DRAWING TO OURSELVES EXTERIOR THINGS

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 45
THAT WE MAY NOT BELIEVE ALL, AND HOW EASILY WE ERR IN SPEECH

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 46
OF HAVING CONFIDENCE IN GOD, WHEN ARROWS OF WORDS ARE AIMED
AGAINST US

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 47
THAT ALL GRIEVOUS THINGS ARE TO BE ENDURED FOR LIFE EVERLASTING

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 48
OF THE DAY OF ETERNITY, AND OF THE DISTRESSES OF THIS LIFE

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 49
OF THE DESIRE OF ETERNAL LIFE, AND HOW GREAT ARE THE BENEFITS PROMISED
TO THEM THAT FIGHT

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 50
HOW A DESOLATE PERSON OUGHT TO OFFER HIMSELF INTO THE HANDS OF GOD

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 51

THAT WE MUST EXERCISE OURSELVES IN HUMBLE WORKS WHEN WE CANNOT
ATTAIN TO THE HIGHEST

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 52

THAT A MAN OUGHT NOT TO ESTEEM HIMSELF WORTHY OF CONSOLATION, BUT
RATHER DESERVING OF CHASTISEMENT

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 53

THAT THE GRACE OF GOD IS NOT COMMUNICATED TO THE EARTHLY-MINDED

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 54

OF THE DIFFERENT MOTIONS OF NATURE AND GRACE

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 55

OF THE CORRUPTION OF NATURE AND OF THE EFFICACY OF DIVINE GRACE

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 56

THAT WE OUGHT TO DENY OURSELVES, AND IMITATE CROSS BY THE CROSS

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 57

THAT A MAN SHOULD NOT BE TOO MUCH DEJECTED WHEN HE FALLS INTO SOME
DEFECTS

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 58

OF NOT SEARCHING INTO HIGH MATTERS, NOR SCRUTINIZING THE SECRET
JUDGMENTS OF GOD

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 59

THAT ALL HOPE AND CONFIDENCE IS TO BE FIXED IN GOD ALONE

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

BOOK IV

CHAPTER 1

WITH HOW GREAT REVERENCE CHRIST OUGHT TO BE RECEIVED

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 2

THAT THE GREAT GOODNESS AND LOVE OF GOD ARE SHOWN TO MAN IN THIS
SACRAMENT

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER BEFORE COMMUNION

CHAPTER 3

THAT IT IS PROFITABLE TO COMMUNICATE OFTEN

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER FOR A GOOD COMMUNION

CHAPTER 4

THAT MANY BENEFITS ARE BESTOWED ON THOSE WHO COMMUNICATE
DEVOUTLY

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 5

ON THE DIGNITY OF THE SACRAMENT AND ON THE PRIESTLY STATE

THE VOICE OF THE BELOVED

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 6

OF SELF-INTERROGATION CONCERNING THE EXERCISE PROPER BEFORE
COMMUNION

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 7

OF THE EXAMINATION OF OUR OWN CONSCIENCE, AND OF A RESOLUTION OF
AMENDMENT

THE VOICE OF THE BELOVED

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 8

OF THE OBLATION OF CHRIST ON THE CROSS, AND THE RESIGNATION OF
OURSELVES

THE VOICE OF THE BELOVED

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 9

THAT WE MUST OFFER OURSELVES AND ALL THAT IS OURS, TO GOD, AND PRAY
FOR ALL

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 10

THAT THE HOLY COMMUNION IS NOT LIGHTLY TO BE FORBORN

THE VOICE OF THE BELOVED

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 11

THAT THE BODY OF CHRIST AND THE HOLY SCRIPTURES ARE MOST NECESSARY
TO A FAITHFUL SOUL

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 12

WITH HOW GREAT DILIGENCE HE WHO IS TO COMMUNICATE OUGHT TO PREPARE
HIMSELF FOR CHRIST

THE VOICE OF THE BELOVED

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 13

THAT A DEVOUT SOUL OUGHT TO DESIRE, WITH THE WHOLE HEART, TO BE
UNITED TO CHRIST IN THIS SACRAMENT

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 14

OF THE ARDENT DESIRE OF SOME DEVOUT PERSONS TOWARDS THE BODY OF
CHRIST

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 15

THE GRACE OF DEVOTION IS ACQUIRED BY HUMILITY AND SELF-ABNEGATION

THE VOICE OF THE BELOVED

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 16

THAT WE OUGHT TO LAY OPEN OUR NECESSITIES TO CHRIST, AND CRAVE HIS GRACE

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

CHAPTER 17

OF AN ARDENT LOVE AND VEHEMENT DESIRE TO RECEIVE CHRIST

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE

CHAPTER 18

THAT A MAN SHOULD NOT BE A CURIOUS SEARCHER INTO THIS SACRAMENT, BUT A HUMBLE FOLLOWER OF CHRIST, SUBMITTING HIS SENSE TO HOLY FAITH

THE VOICE OF THE BELOVED

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PRAYER

THE FOLLOWING OF CHRIST

THE LIFE OF THOMAS A KEMPIS

Born at Kempen in the Diocese of Cologne, about 1379, he died July 25, 1471.

His parents, John and Gertrude Haemerken, were of the artisan class; it is said that Gertrude kept the village school, and most probably the father worked in metals, a common calling in Kempen, whence perhaps the surname Haemerken, or Haemerlein, Latinized Malleolus (a little hammer). We have certain information of only two children, John, the senior by about fourteen years, and Thomas. Thomas was only thirteen when he set out for the schools of Deventer, in Holland. His brother had preceded him thither by ten or twelve years, and doubtless Thomas expected to find him still there. On his arrival, however, he learned that he had gone two years since with five other brothers of the Common Life to lay the foundations of a new congregation of Canons Regular at Windesheim, about twenty miles from Deventer, where he then went and was lovingly received by his brother who provided him with a letter of introduction to the superior of the Brothers of the Common Life at Deventer, Florentius Radewyn. Radewyn gave a warm welcome to the young brother of John Haemerken of Kempen, placed him for the time being in the house and under the maternal care of "a certain noble and devout lady," presented him to the rector of the schools, and paid his first fees, though the master returned the money when he learned whence it came. These particulars we have from the pen of Thomas himself in the biographies, written in his old age, of Gerard Groote, Florentius Radewyn, and their followers (see "The Founders of the New Devotion," London, 1905). For seven years he remained at Deventer, numbered from the first among the disciples of Radewyn, and for a good portion of the time living in his house under his immediate care. It is impossible to exaggerate the influence of those years in the formation of his character. The "new devotion," of which Deventer was then the focus and center, was a revival in the Low Countries in the fourteenth century of the fervour of the primitive

Christians at Jerusalem and Antioch in the first. It owed its inception to the fervid preaching of the Deacon Gerard Groote, its further organization to the prudence and generous devotedness of Florentius Radewyn. Its associates were called the “Devout Brothers and Sisters,” also the “Brothers and Sisters of the Common Life.” They took no vows, but lived a life of poverty, chastity, and obedience, as far as was compatible with their state, some in their own homes and others, especially clerics, in community. They were forbidden to beg, but all were expected to earn their living by the labour of their hands; for the clerics this meant chiefly the transcribing of books and the instruction of the young. All earnings were placed in a common fund, at the disposal of the superior; the one ambition of all was to emulate the life and virtues of the first Christians, especially in the love of God and the neighbour, in simplicity, humility, and devotion. Furthermore, partly to provide the Devout Brothers and Sisters with effective protectors and experienced guides, partly to afford an easy transit to the religious state proper for those of their number who should desire it, Gerard Groote conceived the idea of establishing a branch of the canonical order, which should always maintain the closest relations with the members of the new devotion. This scheme was carried into effect after his untimely death, at the early age of forty-three, by the foundation of the congregation of Windesheim, as it was afterwards called from the tract of land where the first priory was established (1386). These details are given as helpful to a better understanding of the life and character of à Kempis, a typical and exemplary Brother, and for seventy-two years he was one of the most distinguished of the Canons Regular.

At Deventer Thomas proved an apt pupil, already noted for his neatness and skill in transcribing manuscripts. This was a life-long labour of love with him; in addition to his own compositions he copied numerous treatises from the Fathers, especially St. Bernard, a Missal for the use of his community, and the whole Bible in four large volumes still extant. After completing his humanities at Deventer, in the autumn of 1399, with the commendation of his superior, Florentius Radewyn, Thomas sought admission among the Canons Regular of Windesheim at Mount St. Agnes, near Zwolle, of which monastery his brother John was then prior. The house had been established only the previous year, and as yet there was no claustral buildings, no garden, no benefactors, no funds. During his term of

office, which lasted nine years, John à Kempis built the priory and commenced the church. In these circumstances we find the explanation of the fact that Thomas was not clothed as a novice until 1406, at which date the cloister was just completed, nor ordained priest until 1413, the year after the church was consecrated. He was twice elected subprior, and once he was made procurator. The reason assigned by an ancient biographer for the latter appointment is one that does honour both to Thomas and his brethren, his love for the poor. After a time his preference for retirement, literary work, and contemplation prevailed with the Canons to relieve him of the burden. The experience thus gained he made use of in a spiritual treatise, "De fideli dispensatore."

His first tenure of office as subprior was interrupted by the exile of the community from Agnetenberg (1429), occasioned by the unpopular observance of the Canons of Windesheim of an interdict laid upon the country by Martin V. A dispute had arisen in connection with an appointment to the vacant See of Utrecht and an interdict was upon the land. The Canons remained in exile until the question was settled (1432). The community of Mount St. Agnes had dwelt meanwhile in a canonry of Lunenkerk, which they reformed and affiliated to Windesheim. More than a year of this trying period Thomas spent with his brother John in the convent of Bethany, near Arnheim, where he had been sent to assist and comfort his brother, who was ailing. He remained until his death (November, 1432). We find record of his election as subprior again in 1448, and doubtless he remained in office until age and infirmity procured him release. It was part of the subprior's duties to train the young religious, and to this fact no doubt we owe most of his minor treatises, in particular his "Sermons to the Novices Regular." We also know from early biographers that Thomas frequently preached in the church attached to the priory. Two similar series of these sermons are extant ("Prayers and Meditations on the Life of Christ" and "The Incarnation and Life of Our Lord," London, 1904, 1907). They treat of à Kempis' favorite subjects, the mystery of our Redemption, and the love of Jesus Christ as shown in His words and works, but especially in the sufferings of His Passion. In person Thomas is described as a man of middle height and slight of build, dark complexion and vivid coloring, with a broad forehead and piercing eyes; kind and affable towards all, especially the sorrowful and the afflicted; constantly engaged in his favorite

occupations of reading, writing, or prayer; in time of recreation for the most part silent and recollected, finding it difficult even to express an opinion on matters of mundane interest, but pouring out a ready torrent of eloquence when the conversation turned on God or the concerns of the soul. At such times often he would excuse himself, "My brethren," he would say, "I must go: Someone is waiting to converse with me in my cell." A possibly authentic portrait, preserved at Gertruidenberg, bears as his motto the words: "In omnibus requiem quaesivi et nusquam inveni nisi in een Hoecken met een Boecken" (Everywhere I have sought rest and found it nowhere, save in little nooks with little books). He was laid to rest in the eastern cloister in a spot carefully noted by the continuator of his chronicle. Two centuries after the Reformation, during which the priory was destroyed, the holy remains were transferred to Zwolle and enclosed in a handsome reliquary by Maximilian Hendrik, Prince-Bishop of Cologne. At present they are enshrined in St. Michael's Church, Zwolle, in a magnificent monument erected in 1897 by subscriptions from all over the world and inscribed: "Honor, non memoriae Thomae Kempensis, cujus nomen perennius quam monumentum" (To the honor not to the memory of Thomas à Kempis, whose name is more enduring than any monument). The same Maximilian Hendrik, who showed such zeal in preserving and honoring the relics of à Kempis, was also eager to see the cause of his beatification introduced and began to collect the necessary documents; but little more than a beginning was made when he died (1688) and since that date no further steps have been taken.

BOOK I

CHAPTER 1

OF THE IMITATION OF CHRIST AND THE CONTEMPT OF THE WORLD

“HE that followeth Me, walketh not in darkness,” saith the Lord.

These are the words of Christ, whereby we are admonished how we must imitate His life and conversation, if we would be truly enlightened and delivered from all blindness of heart.

Let it, then, be our chief study to meditate on the life of Jesus Christ.

2. The teaching of Christ surpasseth all the teachings of the Saints and he that hath His Spirit will find therein a hidden manna.

But it happeneth that many, from the frequent hearing of the Gospel, feel little emotion, because they have not the Spirit of Christ.

But he that would fully and with relish understand the words of Christ, must study to conform his whole life to Him.

3. What doth it profit thee to dispute deeply about the Trinity, if thou be wanting in humility, and so be displeasing to the Trinity?

In truth, sublime words make not a Saint and a just man; but it is a virtuous life that maketh one dear to God.

I would rather feel compunction, than know how to define it.

If thou didst know the whole Bible outwardly, and the sayings of all the philosophers, what would it all profit thee without charity and the grace of God?

Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity, but to love God and serve Him alone.

This is the highest wisdom, by despising the world, to make progress towards the kingdom of Heaven.

4. It is vanity, therefore, to seek perishing riches, and to trust in them.

Vanity also it is, to court honors, and to lift up one's self on high.

Vanity is it to follow the desires of the flesh, and to desire that for which hereafter there must be a heavy penalty.

Vanity is it to wish a long life, and take but little pains about a good life.

Vanity is it to attend only to the present life, and not to look forward to the things that are to come.

It is vanity to love what is passing away with all speed, and not to be hastening thither where endless joy abideth.

5. Oftentimes call to mind the proverb: “The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor is the ear filled with hearing.”

Study, therefore, to wean thy heart from love of visible things, and to betake thee to the things unseen; for they that follow the pleasures of their senses sully their conscience and lose the grace of God.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

IF WE would really honor Jesus Christ, we must apply ourselves to know Him, to love Him, and to follow Him in the practice of every Christian virtue. This is absolutely necessary for salvation, as we cannot become true Christians but by knowing, loving, and following Christ. To pretend to please our Blessed Savior by a profound knowledge of His Divinity, without endeavoring to follow His example, without living as He lived, would be most dangerously to delude ourselves.

PRAYER

WHAT will it avail me, O Jesus, to study and to know in part Thy supreme greatness, and the most sublime of Thy mysteries, if I endeavor not to derive advantage and merit from them, by cherishing Thy disposition and copying Thy virtues—since, to save my soul, I must not only know, but practice what Thou hast taught me by Thy word and manifested in Thy life for my imitation—I must know and practice my religion? This, my Savior, is the grace which I now ask of Thee, with a firm hope that Thou wilt grant my petition. Amen.

CHAPTER 2

OF HAVING A HUMBLE OPINION OF ONE'S SELF

EVERY man naturally desireth to know; but what doth knowledge avail without the fear of God? Truly, a lowly rustic that serveth God is better than a proud philosopher who pondereth the courses of the stars, and neglecteth himself.

He that knoweth himself, becometh vile to himself, and taketh no delight in the praises of men.

If I knew all things that are in the world, and were not in charity, what would it profit me in the sight of God, Who will judge according to deeds?

2. Cease from overweening desire of knowledge; because many distractions are found there, and much delusion.

Learned men are very willing to seem wise, and to be called so.

Many are the things which it is of little or no profit to the soul to know.

And he is very unwise who attendeth more earnestly to other things than to those which may serve for his salvation.

Many words do not satisfy the soul; but a good life giveth ease to the mind, and a pure conscience affordeth great confidence towards God.

3. The more thou knowest, and the better, so much the heavier will thy judgment therefore be, unless thy life be also more holy.

Be not, then, lifted up for any skill or learning thou hast; but rather fear for the knowledge that is given thee.

If it seem to thee that thou knowest many things, and understandest them well enough; know for all that, the things thou art ignorant of are still more.

Be not high-minded, but rather acknowledge thine ignorance.

Why wouldst thou prefer thyself to another, when there may be found many more learned and better versed in the Law than thou!

If thou wouldst acquire knowledge and learn anything to the purpose, love to be unknown, and to be esteemed as nothing.

4. The highest and most useful lesson we can learn is this: To know truly and to look down upon ourselves.

To think nothing of ourselves, and I always to judge well and highly of others, is great wisdom and high perfection.

If thou shouldst see another openly do wrong, or commit some grievous sins, thou needest not think thyself better; for thou knowest not how long thou mayest be able to persevere in well-doing.

We are all frail; but see thou think none more frail than thyself.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

THE thoughts of man, says the Scripture, are vain and useless, if, in them, he does not apply his mind to know and to love God, to forget and to hate himself. The simple and lively faith of a soul which believes all that God teaches, without examination or hesitation, and performs all that He requires for the attainment of salvation, is preferable to all Divine and human sciences, which, of themselves without such a faith, only fill the mind with pride, leave the heart dry, and avail naught for salvation.

PRAYER

MODERATE, O Jesus, my eagerness to know so much, and correct my negligence in doing so little for salvation; since Thou wilt not Judge me according to what I have known, but by what I have done, or neglected to do to obtain it. Can I apply my thoughts to know Thee thoroughly, and not admire and love Thee? And can I truly know myself, and not despise and hate myself? O life unknown! Life hidden in Jesus Christ, in God! What an excellent means art thou of sanctification and salvation; yet how little art thou practiced amongst Christians! Grant, O Lord, that all may know, esteem, and love it, and be directed by it. Amen.

CHAPTER 3

OF THE DOCTRINE OF TRUTH

HAPPY is he whom truth teacheth by itself, not by figures and passing sounds, but as it is in itself.

Our own way of thinking and our sense often deceive us, and see but a little way. What signifies making a great dispute about hidden and obscure things which for having been ignorant of we shall not be reproved in the judgment?

Wonderful folly! that, neglecting the things that are useful and necessary, we give our attention unbidden to such as are curious and mischievous! Having eyes, we see not.

2. And what matter is it to us of genera and species? He to whom the Eternal Word speaketh is delivered from a multitude of opinions.

From the One Word are all things, and all things speak this One; and this is the Beginning which also speaketh to us.

Without Him no man understandeth, or rightly judgeth.

He to whom all things are one, who referreth all things to one, and seeth all things in one, may be steadfast in heart, and abide in God at peace.

O Truth! my God! make me one with Thee in everlasting charity.

I am oftentimes wearied with the many things I read and hear; in Thee is all I wish or long for.

Let all teachers hold their peace, and all created things keep silence in Thy presence; do Thou alone speak to me.

3. The more a man is united within himself, and interiorly simple, so much the more and deeper things doth he understand without labor, for he receiveth the light of understanding from on high.

A pure, simple, and steadfast spirit is not distracted by the multitude of things he hath to do; for he doeth all for the honor of God, and striveth

within himself to be free from all self-seeking.

Who doth more hinder thee, and give thee more trouble than thine own heart's unmortified affection?

A good and devout man first arrangeth interiorly the works he hath to do exteriorly; and they lead him not to the desires of an evil inclination, but he bendeth them to the judgment of right reason.

Who hath a stronger conflict than he who striveth to overcome himself?

And this ought to be our business, namely: To overcome ourselves; and every day to get more the mastery over ourselves; and to make progress for the better.

4. All perfection in this life is attended by some imperfection, and all our far-seeing is not without a certain obscurity.

The humble knowledge of one's self is a surer way to God than deep researches after science.

Knowledge is not to be blamed, nor simple acquaintance with things, good in itself and ordained by God; but a good conscience and a virtuous life are always to be preferred.

But because many take more pains to be learned than to lead good lives, therefore they often go astray, and bear no fruit at all, or but little.

5. Oh, if men would be as diligent in the rooting out of vices and grafting in of virtues as they are in mooted questions, there would not be so many evils and scandals among the people, nor such laxity in monasteries!

Truly, when the day of judgment cometh, it will not be asked of us, what we have read, but what we have done; not what fine discourses we have made, but how like religious we have lived.

Tell me where now are all those doctors and masters with whom thou wast well acquainted while they were yet alive and in the glory of their learning?

Others now hold their preferments, and I know not whether they ever think of them.

In their lifetime they seemed to be something, and now they are not spoken of.

6. Oh, how quickly passeth away the glory of the world! Oh, that their life had been in keeping with their learning! Then would they have studied and lectured to good purpose.

How many who take little care in serving God are ruined through vain learning in the world.

And because they love rather to be great than humble, therefore they are lost in their own imaginings.

He is truly great who hath great charity.

He is truly great who is little in his own eyes, and counteth for nothing all the heights of honor.

He is truly prudent who esteemeth all earthly things as dung, that he may win Christ.

And he is truly most learned who doth the will of God and forsaketh his own will.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

To study the truths of religion, not so much to know, as to practice them; to listen to the Divine Word, which speaks more to the heart than to the understanding; to know and to do what is necessary for salvation, is the true science of a Christian. I am weary of speculative knowledge, which does not change nor move my heart, but only flatters the curiosity of my mind; I am tired of knowing and saying so much concerning eternal truths and salvation, and yet doing so little to obtain it.

PRAYER

O JESUS! Who hast taught us that not all those who say Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven, but only such as do the will of Thy Father, whose lives correspond with their belief: grant us a truly Christian spirit, a Christian heart, and guide us in the paths of a Christian life. Grant that I may become detached from all things, and in all things seek Thee alone. Grant that I may direct all my knowledge, my whole capacity, all my happiness, and all my exertions to please Thee, to love Thee, and to obtain Thy love for time and eternity. Amen.

CHAPTER 4

OF PRUDENCE IN WHAT WE DO

WE must not trust every word or impulse, but cautiously and patiently weigh the matter according to God.

Alas! oftentimes is evil more readily believed and spoken of another than good; so weak are we.

But perfect men do not easily believe every tale-teller; for they know human weakness is prone to evil, and very apt to slip in speech.

2. It is great wisdom not to be rash in what is to be done, and not to persist obstinately in our own opinions.

It is a part of this wisdom, also, not to believe everything men say, nor straightway to pour into the ears of others what we have heard or believed.

Take counsel of a wise and conscientious man, and seek rather to be instructed by one that is better, then to follow thine own inventions.

A good life maketh a man wise according to God, and giveth great experience. The more humble anyone is in heart, and the more in subjection to God, so much the wiser will he be in all things, and the more at peace.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

NOTHING is more opposite to charity, or more fatal to salvation, than the evil reports we make of one another, whether they be true or false; because they irritate the mind, disorder the heart, foment divisions, and embitter hatreds, and because we cannot obtain God's pardon for them, unless we resolve, in our confessions, to repair the evil we have done and to reconcile those we may have set at variance. We should, therefore, neither spread evil reports of others, nor listen to them and if we do hear anything against our neighbor we should be careful not to repeat it.

PRAYER

GRANT, O my Savior, that I may observe, with the greatest care, Thy precept of charity towards my neighbor, to love him as Thou hast loved us, since this is absolutely necessary for salvation. Give me also that tenderness of charity which may prevent me from wounding it in anyway; for Thou hast said that to offend our neighbor is to wound the apple of Thine eye. Grant, therefore, that I may avoid Thy displeasure by not incurring the displeasure of my neighbor. Amen.

CHAPTER 5

OF READING THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

TRUTH is to be sought in the holy Scriptures; not eloquence.

All holy Scripture should be read in the spirit in which it was written.

We would seek profit in the Scriptures rather than subtlety of speech. “We ought to read devout and simple books as willingly as those that are high and profound.

Let not the authority of the author be in thy way, whether he be of little or great learning; but let love of simple truth lead thee to read.

Inquire not who may have said a thing, but consider what is said.

2. Men pass away, but the truth of the Lord abideth forever.

God speaketh to us in divers ways, without respect to persons.

Our curiosity is often a hindrance to us in reading the Scriptures, when we wish to understand and to discuss where we ought to pass on in simplicity.

If thou wilt derive profit, read with humility, with simplicity, and with faith; and never wish to have the name of learning.

Be fond of inquiring, and listen in silence to the words of the Saints; and let not the parables of the ancients be displeasing to thee, for they are not uttered without a cause.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

READ the sacred Scriptures and books of piety with the same spirit in which they were written; that is, read them in quest of truth, for instruction, for edification, and to bring thee to a truly Christian way of life. Read the holy Scriptures with faith, humility, respect, and docility, praying the Holy

Ghost Who dictated it, to enable thee to understand it, to relish it, and to practice it.

PRAYER

SPEAK, my God, speak to my heart and change it, whilst the truths which I read strike and convince my mind. Grant that, being instructed in Thy law and in Thy holy will, by the reading of good books, I may follow them in all things, so that what Thou teachest may ever be the rule of my conduct. Amen.

CHAPTER 6

OF INORDINATE AFFECTIONS

WHENEVER a man desireth anything inordinately, straightway he is disquieted within himself. The proud and the covetous are never at rest; the poor and humble in spirit pass their life in abundance of peace.

The man who is not yet perfectly dead to self is soon tempted and overcome in little and paltry things.

He that is weak in spirit, and in a certain manner as yet carnal, and inclined to things of sense, cannot without difficulty sever himself wholly from earthly desires.

And therefore he is often sad when he does withdraw himself; and besides, he is easily moved to anger if anyone thwarts him.

2. And, if he has pursued his inclination, forthwith he is burdened with remorse of conscience for having gone after his passion, which helpeth him not at all to the peace he looked for.

It is by resisting the passions therefore, and not by serving them, that true peace of heart is to be found.

Peace, therefore, is not in the heart of the carnal man, nor in the man who is devoted to outward things, but in the fervent and spiritual man.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

THE peace of the soul, next to the grace of God, is the greatest of blessings, and we should spare no pains to maintain it within us. But we can neither obtain nor preserve this peace of the soul but by resisting our passions and irregular desires; for the more we endeavor to satisfy them, the more restless do they make us; the more we fight against them, the less trouble do they give us; the more we resist them, the more do they leave us in peace.

PRAYER

GIVE us, O Lord, this interior peace, this repose of conscience, this tranquillity which raises our confidence in Thy goodness, and makes us faithful in corresponding with it: this peace of God which surpasseth all understanding, which keeps our minds and our hearts in Thy love, and which Thou alone canst give. Calm the storms and emotions of our passions, by giving us courage to overcome them: grant that our desires may become submissive to reason, our reason to faith, and the whole man to God. Amen.

CHAPTER 7

OF AVOIDING ARROGANCE

HE is a vain man that putteth his hope in man, or in things created.

Be not ashamed to wait on others for the love of Jesus Christ, and to be looked upon as poor in this world.

Depend not upon thyself, but place thy hope in God.

Do what thou canst, and God will be with thy good will.

Trust not in thine own knowledge, nor in the cunning of any man living, but rather in the grace of God, Who helpeth the humble, and humbleth them that presume upon themselves.

2. Glory not in riches, if thou have them, nor in friends, because they are powerful, but in God, Who giveth all things, and desireth to give Himself above all things.

Boast not thyself of thy stature or beauty of body, which with a little sickness is spoiled and disfigured.

Be not proud of thine abilities or thy talents, lest thou offend God, to Whom appertaineth whatever good thou mayst naturally have.

3. Esteem not thyself better than others, lest, perhaps, thou be accounted worse in the sight of God, Who knoweth what is in man.

Be not proud of thine own good works; for the judgments of God are other than those of men; and what pleaseth men oftentimes displeaseth Him.

If thou have any good in thee, believe still better things of others; that thou mayest preserve humility.

It will do thee no harm to put thyself below everybody, but it will hurt thee very much to put thyself before anyone.

Continual peace dwelleth with the humble; but in the heart of the proud is frequent envy and indignation.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

DEPEND only upon God, Whom nothing can move, on Whom alone thou ought to rely; for nothing is weaker, more uncertain, and more inconstant than man, who is made up of error, malice, and lies. Hope all things of God, and nothing from thyself, nor from others. Do not glory in thy good works or ability, but in all things, and by all things, give glory to God, to Whom alone glory is due.

PRAYER

AS, O Jesus, Thou hatest and despisest those who, through a secret self-complacency, exalt themselves before Thee, but lovest and honorest those who attribute nothing to themselves but evil, and refer all good to Thee, impart to us, we beseech Thee, interior humility of heart, which brings us nigh to Thee, and makes us worthy of Thy love; heal the pride and vanity of our high and haughty minds, which remove us to a distance from Thee, and excite Thy hatred against us; and make our hearts humble, submissive, and docile to Thy holy will, that so we may bring down Thy mercies upon us. Amen.

CHAPTER 8

OF TOO MUCH INTIMACY

OPEN not thy heart to every man, but discuss thy business with one that is wise and feareth God. Be rarely with young people and strangers.

Fawn not upon the rich, and be not fond of appearing in the presence of the great.

Keep company with the humble and the simple, with the devout and well-ordered, and converse of such things as are edifying.

Be not an intimate of any woman; but in general commend all good women unto God.

Desire to be intimate only with God and His holy Angels; and shun the acquaintance of men.

We should have charity towards all men; but intimacy is not expedient.

It happeneth sometimes that a person while unknown shineth highly in good report; but whose presence offendeth the eyes of them that see him.

Sometimes we think to please others with our company; and we begin rather to be displeasing to them from the bad qualities they discover in us.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

Avoid worldly company, useless conversations, and those overflowings and attachments of the heart which are neither regulated nor governed by the love of God. For all these things dissipate the soul, withdraw it from God, hinder it from being recollected, and deprive it of that interior spirit which is so necessary for salvation; they expose it to many dangers, and insensibly subvert all interior discipline. Let your friends be persons of piety, whose lives are regular and irreproachable, that their good example may withdraw you from sin, and lead you to virtue. Happy the Christian

who is attached only to Jesus Christ, to his duties, and to his salvation; who lives in God and for God, and thus commences in time that which shall be his continual occupation for eternity!

PRAYER

GRANT, O Jesus, that I may love Thee more than parents, relations, or friends, more than I love myself. Grant that I may earnestly endeavor to know Thee, to love Thee, and to follow Thee, that so, having been accustomed and conformed to Thee, I may not be exposed, as many Christians are, to the danger of appearing, after my departure hence, before a God Whom I know not, Whom I have never loved; for not to love Thee in time, is not to love Thee for eternity; whereas, if I endeavor to love Thee now, I shall have reason to hope that I shall love Thee forever. O most amiable God! O most loving God! grant that I may love Thee with my whole heart, with my whole soul, with all my strength, and with all my mind. Amen.

CHAPTER 9

OF OBEDIENCE AND SUBJECTION

IT is a very great thing to be settled in obedience, to live under a superior, and not to be one's own master.

It is much safer to be in subjection than in authority.

Many are under obedience, more out of necessity than charity; and such have suffering and are apt to murmur.

Neither will they acquire liberty of mind, unless they submit themselves with their whole heart for God's sake.

Run hither or thither, thou wilt find no rest but in humble subjection under the government of a superior.

A fancy for places and changing of residence hath deluded many.

2. It is true, everyone is desirous of acting according to his own way of thinking, and is most inclined to such as agree with him in opinion.

But if God is amongst us, we must needs sometimes give up our own opinion for the blessing of peace.

Who is so wise, as to be able fully to know all things?

Be not over-confident therefore in thine own sentiments, but be ready also with pleasure to hear the sentiments of others.

Although thine own opinion be right, yet if for God's sake thou leavest it and followest another man's, thou wilt profit the more by it.

3. For I have often heard that it is safer to listen and to take advice than to give it.

It may also happen that each one's opinion may be right; but to be unwilling to acquiesce in other men's, when reason or occasion requires it, is a sign of pride and obstinacy.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

How delightful to depend solely on God in the persons of our superiors, who hold

His place, and how very meritorious is the constant practice of obedience, which is a perpetual exercise of abnegation, of self-renunciation, and of the most perfect love of God! Obedience constitutes the excellence, the happiness, and the merit of a Christian and religious life, and makes God the absolute master and proprietor of our hearts.

But for this, our minds, our hearts, and all our actions must combine in the practice of obedience: the mind by approving it, the heart by loving it, and our actions by exercising it promptly, generously, and constantly.

PRAYER

Is it possible, O my Savior, to behold Thee sacrifice the independence of a God to obedience, and I not love and practice it? Can I behold Thee, for thirty years perpetually obedient to Thy blessed Mother and St. Joseph, and not endeavor faithfully to observe what Thou ordainest for me by Thine inspiration, by my rules, and by my superiors? How can I listen to the repugnance and difficulty which I experience in obedience, when I behold Thee obedient even to the very executioners who nailed Thee to the Cross? Grant, O Jesus, that, in imitation of Thee, I may subject myself to obedience, and thus evince my desire of pleasing Thee, and of doing in all things, and at all times, Thy holy will. Amen.

CHAPTER 10

OF SUPERFLUITY OF WORDS

FLY as much as possible the tumult of men; for the treating of worldly affairs is a great hindrance, even though they be discoursed of with a simple intention. For we are too easily contaminated and ensnared with vanity.

I would that many a time I had kept silence, and not been in company.

Why are we so fond of speaking and of talking idly together, when yet we seldom return to silence without some wound to conscience?

The reason why we are so fond of talking is, that we seek consolation from one another by much discoursing together; and we wish to lighten our heart, wearied with various thoughts.

And we are very fond of speaking and thinking of those things we very much love or wish for, or that we feel are a contradiction to us.

2. But, alas, it is often vainly and to no purpose; for this outward consolation is no small hindrance to the interior and Divine consolation.

Therefore we must watch and pray, lest the time pass away without fruit.

If thou hast leave to speak, and it is expedient, speak those things that may edify.

Evil custom and negligence about our spiritual advancement, contribute much to the unguardedness of our tongue.

But devout conferences upon spiritual things are no small help to spiritual progress—especially where persons of congenial mind and spirit are associated together in God.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

“WATCH and pray,” is the simple means which Jesus Christ prescribes to enable a Christian to resist temptation, to avoid sin, and secure his

salvation. To speak little to creatures and much to God, to renounce useless and curious conversations, to speak only what is good or necessary, is an excellent method of becoming an interior man, of preserving purity of heart, and peace of conscience, and of becoming entirely united to God. A soul which gives itself through the senses to creatures, and lives not an interior life, but amuses itself with trifles, is not at all in a state to relish the things of God or to apply to prayer or recollection, which are so useful and so necessary for salvation. Why, says St. Austin, why dost thou, O dissipated and wandering soul, seek content in created objects, in the goods and pleasures of life? Seek within thyself, by recollection, the only true and sovereign Good Who is there, and Who alone can satisfy thy desires.

PRAYER

GIVE me, O God, that spirit of interior recollection which will make me attentive to Thy holy Will and faithful to Thy graces. Grant that the remembrance of Thine awful presence may remind me continually of Thy blessed life and conversation, and effectually control me during my earthly pilgrimage. I am weary, O God, of living an exile from Thy presence, and of being so little affected by the consideration of Thy majesty as to do nothing to please Thee. What can I find in Heaven or on earth that is comparable to Thee? Thou art the God of my heart; grant I maybe ever sensible of Thy presence, and desire only the happiness of pleasing Thee, in time, that Thou mayest be my portion for eternity. Amen.

CHAPTER 11

OF ACQUIRING PEACE

WE might have much peace, if we would not busy ourselves with the sayings and doings of other people, and with things which concern us not.

How can he long abide in peace who entangleth himself with other people's concerns; who seeketh occasions abroad; who little or seldom recollecteth himself interiorly?

Blessed are the single-hearted, for they shall enjoy much peace.

2. What is the reason why some of the Saints were so perfect and contemplative?

Because their whole study was to mortify themselves wholly from all earthly desires; and so they were able to cleave to God with all their inmost heart, and freely to attend to themselves.

But we are too much taken up with our own passions, and too solicitous about transitory things.

Seldom do we perfectly overcome one single fault; nor do we ardently desire to make daily progress; therefore we remain cold and lukewarm.

3. If we were perfectly dead to ourselves and no way involved in earthly pursuits, then we could taste the savor of Divine things, and experience something of heavenly contemplation.

The whole hindrance and a very great one is, that we are not free from passions and lusts, and strive not to walk in the perfect way of the Saints.

When we are met by even a little adversity, we are too soon cast down, and seek after human consolation.

4. If we strove like valiant men to stand in the battle, verily we should see the Lord from Heaven assisting us.

For He is ready to help them that fight, trusting in His grace; Who Himself provideth us occasions to fight, in order that we may overcome.

If we place our religious progress in outward observances only, our devotion will soon come to an end.

But let us lay the axe to the root, that being purged of passions, we may possess our minds in peace.

5. If every year we rooted out one fault, we should soon become perfect men.

But now we often feel, on the contrary, that we may find ourselves to have been better and more pure in the beginning of our conversion, than after many years of our profession.

Our fervor and progress ought to increase daily; but now it is esteemed a great thing if anyone can retain something of his first fervor.

If we would do ourselves a little violence in the beginning, afterwards we should be able to do all things with ease and joy.

6. It is hard to give up what we are accustomed to, but harder to go contrary to our own will.

But if thou overcome not little and easy things, how wilt thou surmount greater difficulties?

Resist thine inclination in the beginning, and break off evil habits; lest, by little and little, the difficulty increase upon thee.

Oh, if thou didst consider what peace thou wouldst procure for thyself, and what joy for others, by well-doing, I think thou wouldst be more solicitous for thy spiritual progress.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

As nothing is more opposite to true peace, to the happiness and comfort of this life, and to an assured hope of salvation hereafter, than to abandon ourselves to our passions and submit to be their slaves and victims, so nothing is more capable of establishing within us true repose of conscience and of obtaining merit and happiness in this life, and eternal salvation in the next, than ever to resist and conquer our evil inclinations, and to refuse our hearts, on all occasions, the gratification of their irregular desires. Endeavor, therefore, seriously to die to thyself, to overcome thy repugnance to do good, to subdue the ardor of thy desires, and to renounce thine own will in all things: for this alone will make thee happy in time and eternity.

There is no true peace of conscience, nor hope of future reward, but in doing all for God, and in opposition to thyself.

PRAYER

HOW happy should I be, my Savior, how content and how sure of salvation, did I but strive as much to satisfy Thy justice by penance, and Thy love by fidelity, as I do to satisfy my passions and the demands of self-love! Suffer me not, O Lord, to serve any other master than Thee. Break my chains asunder, deliver me from the unjust and cruel servitude of my passions. My heart is made for Thee. Permit not vanity,

self-love, sensuality, idleness, and anger, like strange gods, to divide it, or rather rob it, of the empire of Thy love. Not to give Thee my whole heart, is to withdraw it from Thee, Who wilt have all or none. O my God and my all! O God of my heart! be Thou my portion forever. Amen.

CHAPTER 12

OF THE ADVANTAGE OF ADVERSITY

IT is good for us now and then to have some troubles and adversities; for oftentimes they make a man enter into himself, that he may know that he is an exile, and place not his hopes in anything of the world.

It is good for us sometimes to suffer contradictions, and to allow people to think ill and slighly of us, even when we do and mean well.

These are often helps to humility, and rid us of vain glory.

For then we more earnestly seek God to be witness of what passes within us, when outwardly we are slighted by men, and incur their discredit.

2. Therefore ought a man so firmly to establish himself in God, as to have no need of seeking many human consolations.

When a man of good will is troubled, tempted, or afflicted with evil thoughts, then he best understandeth what need he hath of God, and that without Him he is incapable of any good.

Then also is he sorrowful; he sigheth and prayeth by reason of the miseries he suffereth.

Then is he weary of longer life; and wisheth death to come, that he may be dissolved, and be with Christ.

Then also he well perceiveth, that perfect security and full peace cannot be realized in this world.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

WE should regard contradictions as the trials by which God would prove and purify our charity. If all persons had the consideration and regard for us which our self-love desires, and which it often induces us to believe we deserve, we should entertain only a natural regard for our neighbor, subject

to the caprices of humor, a species of gratitude purely human, and a secret complacency in ourselves. But God would have us everywhere meet with and suffer contradictions, disappointments, and opposition to our designs, from those with whom we live, that so we may love them solely for His sake, and because He so ordained. Happy the soul which tribulation tries, and temptation purifies, as gold is tried and purified in the fire! It thus becomes worthy of acceptance with God, for it is after God's own heart.

PRAYER

SUPPORT me, O Lord, under all the troubles and contradictions which Thou permittest to befall me and willest I should suffer that they may not weaken my charity for my neighbor, nor my fidelity towards Thee. Grant that temptations, far from separating me from Thee, may unite me more closely to Thee, by obliging me to experience a continual and pressing need of Thy powerful assistance. Amen.

CHAPTER 13

OF RESISTING TEMPTATIONS

AS long as we live in this world, we cannot be without tribulation and temptation.

Hence it is written in Job: “Man’s life on earth is a temptation.”

Every one, therefore, should be solicitous about his temptations, and watch in prayer, lest the devil find opportunity to catch him; who never sleepeth, but goeth about, seeking whom he may devour.

No one is so perfect and holy as not sometimes to have temptations; and we never can be wholly free from them.

2. Nevertheless, temptations are often very profitable to a man, troublesome and grievous though they may be; for in them a man is humbled, purified, and instructed.

All the Saints passed through many tribulations and temptations, and profited by them.

And they that could not support temptations, became reprobate, and fell away.

There is no order so holy, nor place so retired, where there are not temptations or adversities.

3. A man is never wholly secure from temptation as long as he liveth; for there is within us the source of temptation; since we were born in concupiscence.

When one temptation or tribulation is over, another cometh on; and we shall always have something to suffer; for we have lost the advantage of our original happiness.

Many seek to fly temptations, and fall the more grievously into them.

We cannot conquer by flight alone; but by patience and true humility we become stronger than all our enemies.

4. He who only declineth them outwardly, and doth not pluck out their root, will profit little; nay, temptations will the sooner return, and he will find himself in a worse condition.

By degrees and by patience, with longanimity, thou wilt, by God's grace, better overcome them than by harshness and thine own importunity.

Take counsel the oftener in temptation, and do not deal harshly with one who is tempted; but pour in consolation, as thou wouldst wish to be done unto thyself.

5. Inconstancy of mind, and little confidence in God, is the beginning of all evil temptations.

For as a ship without a helm is driven to and fro by the waves, so the man who is negligent, and giveth up his resolution, is tempted in various ways.

Fire trieth iron, and temptation a just man.

We often know not what we are able to do, but temptation discovereth what we are.

Still we must watch, especially in the beginning of temptation; for then the enemy is more easily overcome, if he be not suffered to enter the door of the mind, but is withstood upon the threshold the very moment that he knocketh.

Whence a certain one hath said:

“Resist beginnings; all too late the cure, when ills have gathered strength by long delay.”

For first there cometh into the mind a simple thought; then a strong imagination; afterwards delight, and the evil motion and consent.

And so, by little and little, the malignant foe doth gain full entrance, when he is not resisted in the beginning.

And the longer anyone hath been slothful in resisting, so much the weaker he daily becometh in himself, and the enemy so much the stronger against him.

6. Some suffer grievous temptations in the beginning of their conversion, others in the end; and some are much troubled nearly their whole life.

Some are very lightly tempted, according to the wisdom and equity of the ordinance of God, Who weigheth man's condition and merits, and preordaineth all things for the salvation of His elect.

7. We must not, therefore, despair when we are tempted, but the more fervently pray God to vouchsafe to help us in every tribulation: Who of a

truth, according to the saying of St. Paul, will make such issue with the temptation, that we may be able to sustain it.

Let us, then, humble our souls under the hand of God in every temptation and tribulation; for the humble in spirit He will save and exalt.

8. In temptations and tribulations is it proved what progress a man hath made; and there also is there greater merit, and virtue is made more manifest.

Neither is it a great thing for a man to be devout and fervent while he feeleth no weight of adversity in time of trouble; but if he suffereth patiently there will be hope of great profit.

Some are preserved from great temptations, and are often overcome in daily little ones; that, thus humbled, they may never presume upon themselves in great trials, when they are so weak in such trifling occurrences.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

TEMPTATIONS serve to free us from all lurking inclinations to vanity or self-love, and from at all depending upon ourselves; because they make us feel the weight of our own miseries, give us a disgust for all earthly gratifications, and oblige us to rely solely upon God. They serve also to humble us by the experience they afford us of our own weakness, and of the depth of our natural corruption. They serve, in a word, to convince us of our inability to do the least good, or to avoid the smallest sin, without the assistance of God.

PRAYER

I AM sensible, O Jesus, that in the time of temptation, of myself, I cannot but offend Thee, and that, carried along by my natural inclination for evil, I am in danger of ruining myself. But I know, also, that Thou canst, and Thine Apostle assures me Thou wilt, defend me against the most violent assaults of my passions. Wherefore, mistrusting myself, and relying upon Thee, I will exclaim: "Lord, save me, or I perish;" I Will stretch out my hand to Thee, as St. Peter did, and confidently hope that Thou wilt not let me perish. Amen.

CHAPTER 14

OF AVOIDING RASH JUDGMENT

TURN thine eyes back upon thyself, and see thou judge not the doings of others. In judging others a man toileth in vain; for the most part he is mistaken, and he easily sinneth; but judging and scrutinizing himself, he always laboreth with profit.

We often judge of a thing according as we have it at heart; for true judgment is easily lost through private affection.

If God were always the only object of our desire, we should not be easily disturbed at our own opinions being resisted.

2. But oftentimes there is something lying hid within, or occurring from without, that draws us along with it.

Many secretly seek themselves in what they do, and are not aware of it.

They seem also to continue in good peace, so long as things are done according to their will and judgment; but if aught happen otherwise than they desire, they are soon disturbed, and become sad.

Too often difference of feelings and opinions giveth rise to dissensions between friends and fellow-citizens, between religious and devout persons.

3. An inveterate habit is with difficulty relinquished, and no one is willingly led beyond his own views.

If thou reliest more on thine own reason or industry than on the subduing virtue of Jesus Christ, thou wilt seldom and with difficulty become an enlightened man.

For God willeth us to become perfectly subject to Himself, and by the love that burneth in us to transcend all reason.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

WE frequently allow ourselves to be biased in our judgments by the inclinations of the heart, instead of being guided by the light of the understanding. Through self-love we ordinarily approve in ourselves what in others we frequently condemn; and are as much alive to the defects of our neighbor as we are blind to our own. A soul recollected in the presence of God, and faithful to the motions of His grace, being thus engaged with God, and united to Him, is solely occupied with God in itself and itself in God; and, endeavoring to keep a strict guard over its own heart, it forgives nothing in itself, and everything in others.

PRAYER

O MY God! When shall I be so free from all attachment to creatures, and from all self-seeking, as to keep my mind and my heart solely upon Thee, attentive to my duties and to securing my salvation? Grant, O Jesus, I may forget or be wholly ignorant of everything which I ought neither to know nor observe: and thus live only for Thee, with Thee, and in Thee. Vanities, pleasures, news, amusements, and curiosities, how little, or how really nothing are ye, to a soul for whom its God is its all! Suffer me not, O my Savior, to seek, to know, to love, or to possess anything but Thee, Who art more to me than all things else. Inflammé my heart with an ardent desire of pleasing Thee, and an humble acquiescence in all things to Thy good pleasure. Amen.

CHAPTER 15

OF WORKS DONE OUT OF CHARITY

EVIL ought not to be done for anything in the world, nor for the love of any human being; but yet for the benefit of one that is in need, a good work is sometimes freely to be left undone, or rather to be changed for what is better.

For by this means a good work is not lost, but changed into a better.

Without charity, the outward work profiteth nothing; but whatever is done out of charity, be it ever so little and contemptible, it is all made fruitful; in as much as God regardeth more out of how much love a man doth a work, than how much he doth.

2. He doth much who loveth much. He doth much who doth well what he hath to do. He doth well, who regardeth rather the common good than his own will.

Oftentimes that seemeth to be charity which is rather carnality; for natural inclination, self-will, hope of reward, study of our own interests, will seldom be absent.

3. He that hath true and perfect charity, seeketh himself in nothing, but only desireth God to be glorified in all things.

And he envieth no man, for he loveth no joy for himself alone.

Neither doth he desire to rejoice in himself, but wisheth to find his blessedness above all good things in God.

He attributeth nothing or good to any man, but referreth it all to God, from Whom, as from their fountain, all things proceed, and in Whom, as in their end, all the Saints repose in fruition.

Oh, if one had but a spark of real charity truly would he feel that all earthly things are full of vanity!

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

WE cannot dwell too much upon these words of the author: "God regards more

with how much love and affection a person performs a work than how much he does: and he does much who loves much:" that is, our actions are really pleasing to God, only in proportion as they are influenced by a desire of pleasing Him, and, as it were, stamped with the seal of His love. Whatsoever you do, says St. Paul, do all for the honor and glory of God. It is a lively, active, and often renewed love which constitutes the merit of our good actions; faith itself becomes weak and languishing if not animated by charity and by a pious and affectionate tendency towards the Author of these truths which it unfolds to us.

Let us, therefore, endeavor to love God in all we do, and to do all for the love of Him. All for Thee, O Jesus, all with Thee, all in Thee! Behold, my soul, what thou shouldst say and do incessantly in order to lead a supernatural and meritorious life, and to commence in time what thou hopest to continue throughout eternity.

PRAYER

HOW wearied am I, O my God, with being so often forgetful of Thy presence, and devoid of Thy love! What confusion for me to think so little of a God Whose thoughts are always upon me, and to be so frequently indifferent about Thee, my Jesus, Who art ever burning with the love of me! Suffer me not to live one moment without loving Thee; and as Thou art the center of my heart, inflame me with such a continual affection for Thee, such a lively and ardent desire of pleasing Thee and of seeking Thee in and before all things, that I may find no repose nor true happiness but in Thee. Amen.

CHAPTER 16

OF BEARING THE DEFECTS OF OTHERS

WHATEVER a man cannot amend in himself or in others, he ought to bear with patiently, until God ordain it otherwise.

Reflect that perhaps it is better so to prove thee and thy patience, without which our merits are little worth.

Nevertheless, it behooveth thee to make supplication under such hindrances, that God would vouchsafe to come and help thee, and that thou mayst be able to bear them in good part.

2. If anyone, once or twice admonished, doth not comply, contend not with him; but leave it all to God, that His will may be done, Who knoweth how to turn evil into good, and that He may be honored in all His servants.

Study to be patient in bearing the defects of others, and their infirmities, be they what they may; for thou hast many things, which others must bear withal.

If thou canst not make thyself what thou wouldst be, how canst thou expect to have another so exactly to thy mind?

We would fain see others perfect, and yet our own faults we amend not.

3. We would have others strictly corrected, and we will not be corrected ourselves.

The large liberty others take displeaseth us, and yet we ourselves will not be denied anything we ask for.

We wish others to be kept within the rules, and we ourselves will not bear to be checked ever so little.

And so it is clear how seldom we weigh our neighbor in the same balance with ourselves.

If all were, perfect, what then should we have to bear with from others for the love of God?

4. But now God hath thus ordered it, that we may learn to bear one another's burdens; for no one is without a fault, no one but hath a burden; no one is sufficient for himself, no one is wise enough for himself: but we have to support one another, comfort one another, help, instruct and admonish one another.

But the measure of each man's virtue is best seen in occasions that are adverse.

For the occasions do not make the frailty of a man, but they show what he is.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

HOW excellent a means of sanctifying us and of fitting us for Heaven is the exercise of that charity by which we support in ourselves and in others those weaknesses which we cannot correct! For nothing can humble and confound us before God more than a sense of our own miseries; and nothing can be more just than that we should bear in others those things which we would have them support in ourselves. We should, therefore, bear with the tempers of others, and endeavor to give no cause of uneasiness to anyone on account of our own. It is thus, according to St. Paul, we shall carry one another's burdens, and fulfill the law of Jesus Christ, which is a law of charity, meekness, and patience.

PRAYER

HOW true it is, O Lord, that contradictions are most advantageous to a Christian who endeavors to support them with patience and resignation! For they prove and purify his virtue and bring it to perfection. But Thou knowest what difficulty we experience in supporting these trials; and how sensitive we are to everything that opposes our desires. Permit us not, O God, to yield to our feelings; but grant we may sacrifice them for the happiness of pleasing Thee; since to feel much, and not to follow the bent of our feelings, to keep silence when the heart is moved, and to withhold ourselves when we are all but overcome, is the most essential practice, and the surest mark for that truly Christian virtue which is to gain for us eternal

happiness. This, O Jesus, we hope to obtain from Thine infinite bounty.
Amen.

CHAPTER 17

OF THE MONASTIC LIFE

THOU must learn to beat down self in many things, if thou wouldst live in peace and concord with others. It is no small thing to dwell in monasteries, or in a congregation, and to live there without complaint, and to persevere faithfully even unto death.

Blessed is he who shall have lived there well, and there happily ended.

If thou wouldst persevere dutifully and advance, look on thyself as an exile and a pilgrim upon earth.

Thou must become a fool for Christ's sake, if thou wishest to lead the life of a religious.

2. The habit and the tonsure make but little alteration; but the moral change and the entire mortification of the passions make a true religious.

He that seeketh anything else but simply God, and the salvation of his soul, will find nothing but trouble and sorrow.

And he who doth not strive to be the least, and subject to all, cannot long remain in peace.

3. Thou hast come to serve, not to govern; know thy vocation is to suffer and to labor, not to pass thy time in idleness or vain conversation.

Here, therefore, men are tried, as gold is in the furnace.

Here no man can abide, except he be ready with all his heart to humble himself for the love of God.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

IN order to live happily and contented in a community or religious house, and to labor effectually for the attainment of perfection and salvation, we must endure much, and restrain and conquer ourselves upon many

occasions. As the dispositions of those with whom we live are often contrary to our own, grace must preserve peace and charity, by enabling us to suffer and to bear with a contrariety of tempers, as nature preserves the order of the universe by reconciling a contrariety of elements. We shall never find true repose of conscience, nor acquire an assured hope of salvation, but by the practice of interior mortification and true humility of heart, by which we bear all things and refuse the soul its desires.

PRAYER

As Thou hast commanded me, O Jesus, to seek peace, and to keep it with all men, and as I cannot enjoy this advantage but by humbly bearing with others, and by giving them no cause of uneasiness on my own account, command in this respect what Thou pleasest, and give me what Thou commandest; for how can I bring the pride and haughtiness of my mind to bear and accept willingly the repulses, contempt, and humiliations which so frequently befall me, if Thou assist me not, O Lord, with the all-powerful aid of Thy grace? And how shall I stifle the feelings and sallies of my heart under contradictions, if Thou arrest them not? Grant therefore, O God, that on occasions of repulses or contradictions, influenced by the respect that is due to Thy holy presence, and by the submission which I ought to render to Thy blessed Will, I may calm all troubles within me, and bring all to give place to Thy love. Amen.

CHAPTER 18

OF THE EXAMPLES OF THE HOLY FATHERS

LOOK upon the lively examples of the holy Fathers, in whom shone real perfection and the religious life, and thou wilt see how little it is, and almost nothing, that we do.

Alas, what is our life, if it be compared with theirs!

Saints, and friends of Christ, they served our Lord in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness, in labor and weariness, in watchings and fastings. In prayers and holy meditations, in frequent persecutions and reproaches.

2. Oh, how many and grievous tribulations did the Apostles suffer, and the Martyrs, and Confessors, and Virgins, and all the rest who resolved to follow the steps of Christ!

For they hated their lives in this world, that they might keep them unto life eternal.

Oh, what a strict and self-renouncing life the holy Fathers of the desert led! What long and grievous temptations did they bear! How often were they harassed by the enemy! What frequent and fervent prayers offered they up to God! What rigorous abstinence did they practice! What great zeal, and fervor had they for spiritual progress! What a valiant contest waged they to subdue their imperfections! What purity and straight forwardness of purpose kept they towards God!

By day they labored, and much of the night they spent in prayer; though while they labored, they were far from leaving off mental prayer.

3. They spent all their time profitably, every hour seemed short to spend with God; and even their necessary bodily refection was forgotten in the great sweetness of contemplation.

They renounced all riches, dignities, honors, friends, and kindred; they hardly took what was necessary for life; it grieved them to serve the body even in its necessity.

Accordingly, they were poor in earthly things, but very rich in grace and virtues.

Outwardly they suffered want, but within, they were refreshed with grace and Divine consolation.

4. They were aliens to the world, but they were very near and familiar friends of God.

To themselves they seemed as nothing, and the world despised them; but they were precious and beloved in the eyes of God.

They persevered in true humility, they lived in simple obedience, they walked in charity and patience: and so every day they advanced in spirit, and gained great favor with God.

They were given for an example to all religious; and ought more to excite us to advance in good, than the number of the lukewarm induce us to grow remiss.

5. Oh, how great was the fervor of all religious in the beginning of their holy institute!

Oh, how great was their devotion in prayer! How great their zeal for virtue! How vigorous the discipline that was kept up! What reverence and obedience, under the rule of the superior, flourished in all!

Their traces that remain still bear witness, that they were truly holy and perfect men who did battle so stoutly, and trampled the world under their feet.

Now he is thought great who is not a transgressor; and who can with patience endure what he hath undertaken.

6. Ah, the lukewarmness and negligence of our state! that we soon fall away from our first fervor, and are even now tired of life from slothfulness and tepidity.

Oh, that advancement in virtue be not quite asleep in thee, who hast so often seen the manifold examples of the devout!

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

NOTHING can so powerfully excite us to live holily as the example of those who are holy. Example convinces us of the possibility of virtue, makes it practicable and easy, and offers it to us already illustrated in others, and, as it were, prepared for our exercise. For, when we read the lives of witness the examples of the Saints, we naturally say to ourselves: See what men like ourselves have done, and suffered, and forsaken, for the kingdom of Heaven, which is equally the object of our hopes. But what have we done to obtain it? Why do we not exert ourselves as they did to become worthy of the same recompense? Alas! I have reason to apprehend that when I shall appear before God, He will compare my life with my faith, with my religion, and with the examples of holy men who have lived in the same state at life as myself; and, confronting me with these witnesses, will say to me: See what thou shouldst have done, and how thou hast neglected it; judge thou thyself; what dost thou deserve?

PRAYER

ENTER not, O Lord, into judgment with Thy servant; for my life, when compared with the conduct of the Saints, can never justify me. Grant me the grace which Thou, my Savior, didst merit for me, of attending to the discharge of my duties, of entering into the spirit of religion, of observing its rules and maxims, and of conforming my life to my faith, that so, when I appear before Thee, I may be clothed in the robes of Thy justice, supported by Thy mercy, and animated with Thy love. Amen.

CHAPTER 19

OF THE EXERCISES OF A GOOD RELIGIOUS

THE life of a good religious ought to abound in every virtue: that he may be such inwardly as he seemeth to men outwardly to be.

And with good reason ought he to be much more within than he appears outwardly; for it is God that overseeth us, and we should exceedingly stand in awe of Him, and walk in His sight wherever we may be, as the Angels do in purity.

Every day we ought to renew our purpose, and stir ourselves up to fervor, as if it were the first day of our conversion.

And to say: Help me, O Lord God, in my good purpose, and in Thy holy service, and grant that I may this day begin indeed, since what I have hitherto done is nothing.

2. As our purpose is, so will our progress be; and there is need of much diligence for him that wisheth to advance much.

And if he who strongly purposeth doth yet oftentimes fail, what will he do that seldom or but weakly resolveth?

But the falling off from any good resolution happeneth many ways; and a trifling omission in our exercises hardly passeth over without some loss.

The resolutions of the just depend rather on the grace of God than on their own wisdom; and they always, whatever they take in hand, put their trust in Him.

For man proposeth, but God disposeth; neither is the way of man as he chooseth.

3. If, for piety's sake, or for a brother's benefit, any accustomed exercise be sometimes omitted, it can easily be resumed afterwards.

But if it be laid aside lightly, out of weariness of mind or negligence, it is justly blamable, and will be found to do harm.

Let us try as much as we can, we shall still unavoidably fail in many things.

Nevertheless, we should always have some certain resolution, and especially against the things that are our greatest hindrances.

We must alike examine and set in order both our interior and exterior, for both are necessary to our advancement.

4. If thou canst not be continually recollected, at all events be so sometimes, and at least once a day—in the morning, for example, or the evening.

In the morning frame thy purpose; in the evening examine thy conduct—how thou hast behaved today in word, deed, and thought; for it may be that in these thou hast many times offended God and thy neighbor.

Gird thyself up like a man to resist the wicked suggestions of the devil; bridle gluttony, and thou wilt the easier bridle every inclination of the flesh.

Never be wholly idle, but either reading or writing, or praying or meditating, or laboring at something for the common good.

Nevertheless, bodily exercises are to be practiced with discretion, and not equally to be undertaken by all.

5. Those things which are not common ought not to be done in public; for what is private is more safely practiced in secret.

But thou must take care not to be slothful in what is common, and too ready to do what is singular; but when thou hast fully and faithfully fulfilled what is of obligation, and whatever hath been enjoined thee, then if there be any time left give thyself to thyself, as thy devotion may lead thee.

All cannot use the same exercise; but one suits this person better, another that.

Moreover, according to the diversity of times, are different exercises agreeable; some please on holy days, others suit better on common days.

We have need of one sort in time of temptation, of another in time of peace, and quiet.

There are some things we love to think of when we are sad, and others when we are joyful in the Lord.

6. About the time of the principal festivals we should renew our good exercises, and implore more fervently the intercession of the Saints.

From festival to festival we should make our resolutions, as if we were then to depart from this world, and to come to the eternal festival.

And so we ought carefully to prepare ourselves in seasons of devotion, and walk the more devoutly, and keep every observance the more strictly, as if we were in a little while to receive from God the reward of our labor.

7. And if it be put off, let us believe that we were not well enough prepared, and as yet unworthy of that so great glory which shall be revealed to us in the time appointed; and let us study to prepare ourselves the better for our departure.

“Blessed is that servant,” saith the Evangelist St. Luke, “whom, when the Lord shall come, He shall find watching. Amen, I say unto you, He shall set him over all His possessions.”

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

TO engage us to die to ourselves, and to live to God and for God! How efficacious are lively desires when constantly directed to that object! For we ever accomplish what we earnestly desire: but our misfortune is, that oftentimes our desires of pleasing God are weak and feeble, while the desires of gratifying ourselves are strong and active. Hence proceeds the inefficacy of our good purposes, which is a great obstacle to perfection and salvation. We wish to give ourselves to God, and we wish it not; we desire to do so in time of prayer and the Holy Communion, and at other times we desire it not. We, in part, and for a time only, would acquit ourselves of our duties; hence our lives become a succession of good desires and evil effects, of promises and infidelities. Is this to labor effectually for salvation?

PRAYER

WEARY, O Lord, of the inefficacy of our desires, and of offering Thee only thoughts which we reduce not to practice, and promises which we never fulfill, we earnestly supplicate Thee to grant us the grace of adding effect to our desires, and of uniting the practice with the knowledge of virtue; for we well know, as Thou teachest in the Gospel, that not every one who says, “Lord, Lord,” shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven, but only those who do the will of Thy Father; grant, therefore, O my Savior, that I may not only think of and desire, but ever accomplish Thy blessed will. Amen.

CHAPTER 20

OF THE LOVE OF SOLITUDE AND SILENCE

SEEK a convenient time to attend to thyself; and reflect often upon the benefits of God to thee.

Let curiosities alone.

Read such matters as may produce compunction rather than give occupation.

If thou wilt withdraw from superfluous talking, and idle visitings, and from hearing new things and rumors, thou wilt find time sufficient and proper to spend in good meditations.

The greatest Saints shunned the company of men when they crowd, and chose rather to live unto God in secret.

2. As often as I have been amongst men, said one, I have returned less a man. This we too often experience when we talk long.

It is easier to keep silence altogether than not to fall into excess in speaking.

It is easier to keep retired at home than to be enough upon one's guard abroad.

He, therefore, who aims at inward and spiritual things, must, with Jesus, turn aside from the crowd.

No man can safely appear in public but he who loves seclusion.

No man can safely speak but he who loves silence.

No man can safely be a superior but he who loves to live in subjection.

No man can safely command but he who hath learned how to obey well.

3. No man can rejoice securely but he who hath the testimony of a good conscience within.

Yet even the security of the Saints was always full of the fear of God.

Neither were they the less careful and humble in themselves, because they shone with great virtues and grace.

But the security of the wicked ariseth from their pride and presumption, and in the end turns to their own deception.

Never promise thyself security in this life, however good a religious or devout a solitary thou mayst seem to be.

4. Oftentimes the highest in men's estimation have been in the greater danger, by reason of their too much confidence.

And hence it is more useful for many not to be wholly without temptations, but to be very often assaulted, lest they be too secure, lest perhaps they be lifted up into pride, and even turn aside, with too little restraint, after exterior consolations.

Oh, how good a conscience would he keep who should never seek transitory joys, and never busy himself about the world!

Oh, how great peace and tranquillity would he have who should cut off all vain solicitude, and think only of the things of God and his salvation, and place his whole hope in God!

5. No one is worthy of heavenly consolation who hath not diligently exercised himself in holy compunction.

If thou wouldst feel compunction to thy very heart, enter into thy chamber and shut out the tumult of the world: as it is written: "Be sorry in your beds."

Thou wilt find in thy cell what thou wilt too often lose abroad.

The cell continually dwelt in, groweth sweet; but ill guarded, it begetteth weariness.

If, in the beginning of thy religious life, thou dwell in it and keep it well, it will be to thee afterwards as a dear friend and most delightful solace.

6. In silence and quiet the devout soul maketh progress, and learneth the hidden things of Scripture.

There she findeth floods of tears, wherein each night she may wash and be cleansed; and so become the more familiar with her Creator, the further she dwelleth from all the tumult of the world.

For who so withdraweth himself from acquaintances and friends, to him will God, with His holy Angels, draw near.

Better is it to lie hid and take diligent care of thyself, than, neglecting thyself, to work miracles.

It is praiseworthy for a religious but seldom to go abroad, to shun being seen, and to have no wish to see men.

7. Why dost thou wish to see what it is not lawful for thee to have? The world passeth away and its concupiscence.

The longings of sense draw thee to roam abroad; but when the hour hath passed away, what dost thou bring back with thee but a weight upon thy conscience, and a dissipated heart?

Oftentimes a joyous going abroad begetteth a sorrowful return home: and a merry evening maketh a sorrowful morning.

So all carnal joys enter pleasantly; but at the end bring remorse and death.

8. What canst thou see elsewhere that thou dost not see here? Behold the heavens, and the earth, and all the elements; for out of these are all things made.

9. What canst thou see anywhere that can last long under the sun?

Thou trustest that perchance thou wilt be satisfied; but thou wilt never be able to reach it.

If thou couldst see all things at once before thee, what would it be but an empty vision?

Lift up thine eyes to God on high, and pray for thy sins and negligences.

Leave vain things to vain people; look thou to those things which God hath commanded thee.

Shut thy door upon thee, and call unto thee Jesus thy beloved.

Stay with Him in thy cell; for nowhere else shalt thou find so great peace.

If thou hadst never left it, nor hearkened to any rumors, thou wouldst have remained longer in happy peace. But the moment thou delightest to give ear to novelty, thou must suffer from thence disquietude of heart.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

EXTERIOR retirement is not sufficient to engage and satisfy a heart which would really withdraw itself from creatures to be occupied with itself alone; but interior retirement is likewise necessary, which is a spirit of recollection and prayer. A soul which is separated from all the amusements of the

senses, seeks and finds in God that pure satisfaction which it can never meet with in creatures. A respectful and frequent remembrance of the presence of God occupies the mind, and an ardent desire of pleasing Him and of becoming worthy of His love engages the heart. It is absorbed in Him alone: all things else dwindle into nothing. It buries itself in its dear solitude, and dies to itself and all things in God: it breathes only His love, it forgets all to remember only Him; penetrated with grief for its infidelities, it mourns incessantly in His presence; it sighs continually for the pleasure of seeing and possessing Him in Heaven; it nourishes itself with reading good books, and with the exercise of prayer; it is never tired of treating with God on the affairs of salvation, at least it humbly supports the irksomeness it may experience; and with a view of honoring His sovereign dominion by the complete destruction of sin in itself, it renounces all desire of finding any other satisfaction than that of pleasing Him.

PRAYER

O MY God, when will silence, retirement, and prayer, become the occupations of my soul, as they are now frequently the objects of my desires? How am I wearied with saying so much and yet doing so little for Thee! Come, Jesus, come, Thou, the only object of my love, the center and supreme happiness of my soul! Come, and impress my mind with such a lively conviction of Thy presence that all within me may yield to its influence. Come, Lord, and speak to my heart, communicate to it Thy holy will, and mercifully work within it both to will and to do according to Thy good pleasure. Alas! How long shall my exile be prolonged? When shall the veil be removed which separates time from eternity? When shall I see that which I now believe? When shall I find what I seek? When shall I possess what I love, which is Thyself, O my God! Grant, O Jesus, that these holy desires with which Thou now inspirest me, may be followed by that eternal happiness which I hope for from Thine infinite mercy. Amen.

CHAPTER 21

OF COMPUNCTION OF HEART

IF thou wouldst make any progress, keep thyself in the fear of God, and be not too free; curb all thy senses under discipline, and give not thyself up to foolish mirth. Give thyself to compunction of heart, and thou shalt find devotion.

Compunction opens the way to much good which dissipation is wont quickly to lose.

It is wonderful that any man can ever abandon himself wholly to joy in this life, when he considereth and weigheth his exile and the many dangers of his soul.

2. Through levity of heart and neglect of our defects we feel not the sorrows of the soul; and we often vainly laugh when in all reason we should weep.

There is no true liberty nor profitable joy but in the fear of God with a good conscience.

Happy is the man that can cast away all the hindrance of distraction, and recollect himself in the unity of holy compunction.

Happy the man who casteth away from him whatever may stain or burden his conscience.

Strive manfully: habit is overcome by habit.

If thou canst let men alone, they will let thee alone to do whatever thou hast to do.

3. Busy not thyself in matters which appertain to others; and entangle not thyself in the affairs of the great.

Have always an eye upon thyself in the first place, and admonish thyself preferably to all thy dearest friends.

If thou hast not the favor of men, be not afflicted; but let it seriously concern thee, that thou dost not carry thyself so well and circumspectly as a servant of God and a devout religious ought to do.

Oftentimes it is better and safer for a man not to have many consolations in this life, especially such as are according to the flesh. Still, that we have not Divine comfort is our own fault, because we seek not compunction of heart, and do not wholly renounce vain and outward satisfactions.

4. Know that thou art unworthy of heavenly consolation, but rather deservest much tribulation.

When a man hath perfect compunction, then the whole world is to him burdensome and distasteful.

A good man findeth abundant matter for sorrow and tears.

For whether he considereth himself, or thinketh of his neighbor, he knoweth that no man liveth here below without tribulation.

And the more strictly he doth consider himself, the greater is his sorrow.

The subjects of just sorrow and interior compunction are our sins and vices, in which we are so enrapt that we are seldom able to fix our mind on heavenly things.

5. Didst thou think oftener of thy death than of a long life, no doubt but thou wouldst be more in earnest for thine amendment.

Didst thou also well ponder in thy heart the future pains of Hell or Purgatory, methinks thou wouldst bear willingly labor and sorrow, and fear no kind of austerity.

But because these things reach not the heart, and we still love flattering pleasure, therefore we remain cold and very slothful.

Oftentimes it is our want of spirit that maketh the wretched body complain for so slight cause.

Pray, therefore, humbly to the Lord to give unto thee the spirit of compunction; and say with the Prophet: "Feed me, O Lord, with, the food of tears, and give me to drink the tears in measure."

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

CAN we be sensible of our miseries and not deplore them, and humble ourselves under them before God, and have continual recourse to Him to support and keep us from offending Him? It is this humble diffidence in

ourselves, and firm confidence in God, which constitute the spirit of compunction of which the author speaks in this chapter. How is it possible we should taste true joy for one moment in this life, in which we are beset with miseries and sin—are continually in danger of being lost forever, and are exiles from Paradise, our true country? Well might St. Augustine say that a true Christian suffereth life, and sigheth after death, which will put an end to sin, and unite him forever to his God. How afflicting to feel ever prone to offend God—always in danger of forfeiting salvation! O life! How burdensome art thou to a soul that truly loves God, and is grieved at being separated at a distance from Him—an exile from Heaven! O death, how sweet art thou to a soul that breathes only God, and can no longer exist without possessing Him!

PRAYER

GRANT, O God, that my heart may become detached from all things, and, being wholly recollected in Thee, relish no other pleasure than that of loving Thee, of acting and suffering for Thy sake. I willingly consent to the sweet portion Thou allot—test me to do Thy will in time, by patiently receiving all the pains Thou sendest me, that Thou mayst become, my happiness for eternity. What should I not do and suffer for such a reward? Keep me, O Lord, in the holy desire with which Thou now inspirest me, of sparing no pains to obtain it. Amen.

CHAPTER 22

OF THE CONSIDERATION OF HUMAN MISERY

WRETCHED art thou, wheresoever thou be and whithersoever thou turn thee, unless thou turn thyself unto God.

Why art thou troubled that things go not with thee as thou wishest and desirest? Who is there that hath all things according to his will? Neither I, nor thou, nor any man upon earth.

There is no man in the world without some trouble or affliction, be he King or Pope.

Who then, is the best off? Truly he that is able to suffer something for the love of God.

2. Weak-minded and inconstant people often say: See what a happy life that man leadeth! How rich he is, how great, how powerful and exalted!

But take heed to heavenly riches, and thou wilt see that all these temporal ones are nothing; yea, most uncertain, and rather a heavy burden, since they never are possessed without solicitude and fear.

Man's happiness is not the having temporal goods in abundance; but a moderate portion is sufficient for him.

Truly it is a misery to live upon the earth.

The more a man desireth to be spiritual, the more distasteful doth this present life become to him; for he the better understandeth, and more clearly seeth the defects of human corruption.

For to eat, to drink, to watch, to sleep, to rest, to labor, and to be subject to the other necessities of nature, truly is a great misery and affliction to a devout man, who longeth to be released, and to have done with all sin.

3. For the interior man is greatly weighed down by the necessities of the body in this life.

Hence the Prophet devoutly prayeth that he may be free from them, saying: "From my necessities deliver me, O Lord."

But woe to them that know not their own misery; and still more woe to them that make this wretched and perishable life the object of their love.

For some there are who cling to it so closely (though even by laboring or by begging they hardly have bare necessities) that could they live here always, they would care nothing for the kingdom of God.

4. O senseless people! and unbelieving in heart, to lie buried so deep in earthly things; as to relish nothing but what is carnal!

Miserable men! yet a while, and in the end they will feel bitterly what a worthless thing and nothing it was that they have been loving.

But the Saints of God, and all devoted friends of Christ, looked not to what pleased the flesh, nor to what flourished for the time of this life; but all their hopes and aims inspired after the good things that are eternal.

All their desire tended upwards to the things everlasting and invisible, for fear lest by the love of things visible they should be dragged down to things below.

Lose not, brother, thy confidence of making spiritual progress; thou hast yet time—the hour is not yet passed.

5. Why wilt thou put off thy purpose from day to day? Arise, and begin this very instant, and say: Now is the time to do, now is the time to fight, now is the proper time to amend my life.

When thou art troubled and afflicted, then is the time of merit.

Thou must pass through fire and water before thou come to refreshment.

Except thou do violence to thyself, thou wilt not overcome vice.

As long as we carry about this frail body, we cannot be free from sin, nor live without weariness and sorrow.

Fain would we be at rest from all misery; but since we have lost innocence through sin, we have lost also true blessedness.

We must therefore have patience, and wait God's mercy, till iniquity pass away, and this mortality be swallowed up in life.

6. Oh, how great is human frailty, which is ever prone to vice!

Today thou confessest thy sins, and tomorrow thou again committest what thou didst confess.

Now thou purposest to be upon thy guard, and an hour after thou art acting as if thou hadst made no resolution.

Justly then may we humble ourselves, and never think anything great of ourselves; since we are so frail and unstable.

And even what we have at last just acquired through grace, and with great labor, may soon be lost through negligence.

7. What will become of us in the end, if we begin so early to grow lukewarm?

Woe to us if we thus wish to turn aside to rest, as if there were already peace and security, when there doth not as yet appear a trace of true holiness in our deportment!

Very useful would it be for us to be yet again instructed, like good novices, to the highest morality—if, haply, there might be hope of some future improvement and greater spiritual progress.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

WHAT a happiness, and what a gain to see and to find God, in Whom we may forget all our cares, and end all our miseries! And how happy are we in knowing and feeling that it is really true happiness, a heaven upon earth, to suffer all for God's sake, even such things as are most humiliating and repugnant to our nature! for this can proceed only from the true love of God. How miserable are we, if we are not sensible of or love the miseries of this life, and sigh not incessantly for the enjoyments of the life to come! How justly does St. Gregory observe that to act thus is to love hunger and misery, and not to love nourishment and happiness! Can we experience every hour, as we do, the inconstancy and frailty of our hearts, how soon we forget our good resolutions, and how light we make of our promises to God, and not humble ourselves in His presence, and implore Him, with holy Judith, to fortify us and make us faithful!

PRAYER

WE beseech Thee, O Father of mercies, and God of all consolation, to support us in the perpetual combats we are summoned to maintain against our passions, our self-love, and our whole self, which is so opposed to Thee; for alas! O God, what can we do of ourselves, if Thou support us not,

but fall into sin and offend Thee? Leave us not, therefore, to ourselves, but strengthen us in the inward man, that so we may at all times and in all things renounce our evil inclinations, which are incessantly endeavoring to withdraw our hearts from Thee. Complete Thy conquest and make us all Thine Own both now and forever. Amen.

CHAPTER 23

OF THE THOUGHTS OF DEATH

A VERY little while and all will be over wIth thee here. See to it, how it stands with thee in the next life. Man today is, and tomorrow he is seen no more.

And when he is taken away from the sight, he is quickly also out of mind.

Oh, the dullness and the hardness of the human heart, that dwelleth only upon things present, instead rather of providing for those which are to come!

Thou shouldst so order thyself in every deed and thought as if thou wert immediately to die.

If thou hadst a good conscience, thou wouldst not much fear death.

It were better to shun sin than to fly death.

If thou art not prepared today, how wilt thou be tomorrow?

Tomorrow is an uncertain day; and how knowest thou if thou shalt have tomorrow?

2. Of what use is it to live long, when we advance so little?

Ah, long life doth not always amend us; nay, oftentimes doth rather augment our guilt.

Would that even for one day we had behaved ourselves well in this world!

Many count the years of their conversion; but oftentimes the fruit of amendment is but little.

If it is a fearful thing to die, perhaps it will be still more dangerous to live longer.

Blessed is the man that hath the hour of his death continually before his eyes, and daily putteth himself in order for death.

If thou hast at any time seen a person die, reflect that thou too must pass the same way.

3. When it is morning, think thou wilt not live till evening.

And when evening comes, venture not to promise thyself the next morning.

Be, therefore, always in readiness, and so live that death may never find thee unprepared.

Many die suddenly and unprovidedly, for the Son of Man will come at the hour when He is not looked for.

When that last hour shall have come, then thou wilt begin to think far otherwise of all thy past life; and great will be thy grief that thou hast been so neglectful and remiss.

4. How happy and how prudent is he who now striveth to be in life what he would fain be found in death.

For it will give great confidence of dying happily to have a perfect contempt of the world, a fervent desire to advance in virtue, a love of discipline, the spirit of penance, readiness of obedience, abnegation of self, and patience to bear any kind of adversity for the love of Christ.

Many are the good works thou canst do whilst in health; but when thou art sick, I know not what thou wilt be able to do.

Few are improved by sickness; so also they that go much abroad seldom grow in sanctity.

5. Trust not in thy friends and neighbors, and put not off thy soul's welfare till the future, for men will forget thee sooner than thou thinkest.

It is better to provide now in time, and send some good before thee, than to trust to the assistance of others after death.

If thou art not solicitous for thyself now, who will be solicitous for thee hereafter?

Now is the time very precious, now is the acceptable time, now is the day of salvation.

But, O misery! that thou spendest not this time more profitably, wherein thou hast it in thy power to merit that thou mayst live eternally.

The time will come when thou wilt fain implore one day or even one hour for amendment; and I know not if thou wilt obtain it.

6. Oh, then, dearly beloved, from what great danger mayst thou free thyself, from what great fear be rescued, if only thou wouldst be always

fearful, and looking for death!

Study, therefore, so to live now, that in the hour of death thou mayst be able rather to rejoice than to fear.

Learn now to die to the world, that then thou mayst begin to live with Christ.

Learn now to despise all things, that then thou mayst freely go to Christ.

Chastise thy body now by penance, that then thou mayst have a certain confidence.

7. Ah, fool! why thinkest thou to live long, when here thou hast not a day secure?

How many souls have been deceived, and snatched unexpectedly from life!

How often hast thou heard related, that such a one fell by the sword, another was drowned, another falling from on high broke his neck, this man died at table, that other came to his end at play!

Some perish by fire, some by the sword, some by pestilence, some by the hands of robbers; and so death is the end of all; and man's life passeth away suddenly like a shadow.

8. Who will remember thee when thou art dead? And who will pray for thee?

Do now, beloved, do now, all thou canst; for thou knowest not when thou art to die, and, moreover, thou knowest not what will befall thee after death.

Whilst thou hast time, amass for thyself immortal riches.

Think of nothing but thy salvation; care only for the things of God.

Make to thyself friends now, by venerating the Saints of God, and imitating their actions, that when thou shalt fail in this life, they may receive thee into everlasting dwellings.

9. Keep thyself as a pilgrim and a stranger upon earth, that hath no concern with the business of the world.

Keep thy heart free and lifted up to God, for thou hast not here a lasting city.

Send thither thy prayers and daily sighs, with tears, that thy spirit may merit after death to pass happily to our Lord. Amen.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

To fear death, and not to avoid sin, which alone can make it really terrible, is to fear it unavailably for salvation; for, as Christians, we ought to dread it so as to make the fear of it the motive and rule of a good life. The great secret of dying happily is to live always in the same state in which we hope to die, and in which we desire that God may find us when our last hour shall have arrived. We should, therefore, do all the good and practice all the virtues now, which we shall then wish to have done and practiced. Endeavor to die daily to some one of all those things which, when thou departest hence, thou must leave forever. Happy the Christian who dies often in spirit ere he quits the flesh. His death shall be holy and precious in the sight of God.

PRAYER

KNOWING that I shall certainly die, but ignorant of the day, of the hour, and of the state of my soul, in which I shall depart hence, I beseech Thee, most blessed Savior, by the merits of Thy sacred Passion, to prepare me for that awful moment. Assist me to become diligent in my employments, faithful to Thy graces, attentive at my prayers, regular in frequenting the Sacraments, and constant in the performance of those good works, and in the practice of those virtues which are proper for my state; that so, through Thy merits, I may experience consolation in my last moments, and leave this valley of tears in the assured hope of salvation. Grant that I may ever persevere in Thy grace, seek in all things to please Thee, and breathe only Thy love: for living thus, my Jesus, by Thee, for Thee, and like unto Thee, it will be at all times most advantageous for me to die, that I may never offend Thee more, but see, love, and enjoy Thee for all eternity. Amen.

CHAPTER 24

OF JUDGMENT AND THE PUNISHMENT OF SINNERS

IN all things look to the end, and how thou wilt stand before the strict Judge, from Whom there is nothing hid; Who takes no bribes, and receives no excuses, but will judge that which is just.

O most miserable and foolish sinner, what wilt thou answer unto God, Who knoweth all thine evil deeds—thou who art sometimes afraid of an angry man?

Why dost thou not provide thee against the day of judgment, when no man can be excused or defended by another, but each one will have enough to do to answer for himself?

Now thy labor is profitable, thy tears are acceptable, thy groans are heard, thy sorrow is satisfying and purifieth the soul.

2. The patient man hath a great and wholesome Purgatory; who, suffering wrongs, is more concerned at another's malice than at his own injury; who prays freely for his adversaries, forgiving their offenses from his heart; who delays not to ask pardon of others; who is easier moved to pity than to anger; who does frequent violence to himself, and strives to bring his flesh wholly in subjection to the spirit.

Better is it to purge away our sins, and cut off our vices now, than to keep them for purgation hereafter.

Truly we deceive ourselves, through the inordinate love we bear the flesh.

3. What else Will that fire devour but thy sins?

The more thou sparest thyself now, and followest the flesh, so much the more dearly shalt thou pay for it hereafter, and the more fuel dost thou lay

up for that fire.

In what things a man hath most sinned, in those things shall he be most grievously punished.

There the slothful will be pricked with burning goads. the gluttonous tormented with extreme hunger and thirst; there the luxurious and the lovers of pleasure will have burning pitch and fetid sulfur rained upon them; and the envious, like rabid dogs, will howl for grief.

4. There will be no vice but will have its own peculiar torment.

There the proud will be filled with all confusion, and the avaricious pinched with the most miserable want.

There one hour of punishment will be more grievous than a hundred years of the most bitter penance here.

There will be no rest, no consolation for the damned; but here we sometimes cease from labor and enjoy the consolation of our friends.

Be, therefore, now solicitous and sorrowful for thy sins, that in the day of judgment thou mayst be with the blessed; for then the just shall stand with great constancy against those that have afflicted and oppressed them.

Then will he stand up to judge who now humbly submitteth himself to the judgment of men.

Then shall the poor and humble have great confidence, and the proud will fear on every side.

5. Then will it appear that he was wise in this world, who for Christ's sake learned to be a fool and despised.

Then every tribulation borne with patience shall be pleasing, and all iniquity shall stop her mouth.

Then shall every devout person rejoice, and all the irreligious shall be sad.

Then shall the flesh that was afflicted exult more than if it had always fared in delights.

Then shall the mean habits shine, and the fine garment grow dingy.

Then shall the poor cottage be praised above the gilded palace.

Then shall enduring patience more avail than all the power of the world.

Then shall simple obedience be more highly exalted than all worldly cunning.

6. Then a pure and good conscience shall bring more joy than learned philosophy.

Then shall the contempt of riches far outweigh all the treasures of the children of earth.

Then shalt thou find more consolation in having prayed devoutly than in having feasted daintily.

Then shalt thou rejoice more in having kept silence than for having more long discourses, or talked much.

Then shall holy works be of greater value than multitudes of goodly words.

Then shall strictness of life and hard penance please more than all the delights of earth.

Learn to suffer in little things now, that then thou mayst be delivered from more grievous sufferings.

Try first here what thou canst bear hereafter.

If now thou canst endure so little, how wilt thou be able to suffer eternal torments?

If now a little suffering makes thee so impatient, what will Hell do then?

Behold assuredly, both joys thou canst not have—to delight thyself here in this world, and afterwards to reign with Christ.

7. If up to this very day thou hadst always lived in honors and pleasures, what would it all profit thee, did it happen that thou must immediately die?

All, therefore, is vanity, except to love God and serve Him only.

For he that loveth God with his whole heart, feareth neither death, nor punishment, nor judgment, nor Hell; for perfect love giveth secure access to God. But he who still finds delight in sin, no wonder if he fear death and judgment.

It is good, however, if love as yet reclaim thee not from evil, that at least the fear of Hell do check thee.

For, indeed, he that setteth aside the fear of God will not be able to persevere long in good, but will very soon fall into the snares of the devil.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

How powerfully do the fear of God's judgments and the dread of a miserable eternity act as a restraint upon our passions, arrest the sallies of temper, and oblige us to withdraw from the allurements and pleasures of sin! To what end (let us say to ourselves in time of temptation) is the

criminal pleasure of this sin of revenge, impurity, anger, injustice, or lying to afford myself a momentary gratification and should I die immediately after having yielded, without repentance, without the Sacraments (which may happen. and which does happen to thousands), where will this sinful enjoyment terminate?—in a miserable eternity. A momentary pleasure, an eternity of pain! No, I will not expose myself to the danger of being miserable for ever, for the sake of a moment of pleasure. How true it is, according to the Wise Man, that to avoid sin, at least habitual sin, we must remember our last end. Did we frequently and seriously reflect that we must one day give an exact account of our consciences, of the conduct of our whole lives, of all our sins, to a Judge Who knoweth and remembereth all things, who would not be terrified at the apprehension of judgment, and of the terrible account we are then to give, and would not watch over himself, and endeavor to correct all his faults? Let us be convinced that the sure way to avoid condemnation in the next life, is to condemn and punish ourselves in this.

PRAYER

O SOVEREIGN Judge of the living and the dead! Who, at the moment of our death, will decide our eternal doom, remember that Thou art our Savior as well as our Judge, and that as much as our sins have provoked Thee to wrath, Thy sacred Wounds have inclined Thee to mercy. Look, therefore, on those Wounds inflicted on Thee for our sins, and on the Blood which Thou hast shed for their expiation, and by those precious pledges of salvation we conjure Thee to pardon our manifold transgressions. Amen.

CHAPTER 25

OF THE FERVENT AMENDMENT OF OUR WHOLE LIFE

BE watchful and diligent in the service of God, and often reflect:

What hast thou come hither for, and why hast thou left the world? Was it not that thou mightest live for God, and become a spiritual man?

Be fervent, then, in making progress; for thou shalt shortly receive the reward of thy labors, and then neither fear nor sorrow shall come near thy borders.

Thou shalt labor a little now, and thou shalt find great rest, yea, everlasting joy.

If thou continue faithful and fervent in doing, God will doubtless be faithful and rich in rewarding.

Thou must keep a good and firm hope of coming to the crown; but thou must not be too secure, lest thou grow indolent, or be lifted up.

2. When a certain anxious person, who oftentimes wavered between hope and fear, once overcome with sadness, threw himself upon the ground in prayer before one of the altars in the church, and revolving these things in his mind, said, oh, if I only knew that I should persevere; that very instant he heard within him this heavenly answer: And if thou didst know this, what wouldst thou do? Do now what thou wouldst then do, and thou shalt be perfectly secure.

And immediately being consoled and comforted, he committed himself to the Divine will, and his anxious wavering ceased.

He had no longer any wish for curious searchings to find out what should happen to him, but studied rather to learn what was the acceptable and

perfect will of God for the beginning and the perfecting of every good work.

3. “Hope in the Lord,” saith the Prophet: “and do good, and inhabit the land, and thou shalt be fed with the riches thereof.”

There is one thing that keepeth many back from spiritual progress, and from fervor in amendment; namely, a dread of the difficulty or of the labor that is necessary in the struggle.

And assuredly they especially advance beyond others in virtue, who strive the most manfully to overcome the very things which are the hardest and most contrary to them.

For there a man doth profit most and merit more abundant grace, where he doth most overcome himself and mortify his spirit.

4. All have not; indeed, equal difficulties to overcome and mortify; but a diligent and zealous person will make greater progress, though he have more passions than another, who is well-regulated but less fervent in the pursuit of virtues.

Two things especially conduce to great improvement; namely; forcibly to withdraw one’s self from what nature is viciously inclined to, and fervently to follow up the good one is most in need of.

Study, likewise, especially to guard against and to get the better of such things as oftenest displease thee in others.

5. Turn all occasions to thy spiritual profit, so that the good examples thou mayst see or hear of, may stir thee up to imitate them.

And whatever thou shalt observe that is blameworthy; take care not to do the same thing thyself; or if thou hast ever done so, study to amend as soon as possible.

As thine eye observeth others, so again thou art also observed by others.

How pleasant and sweet it is to see brethren fervent, and devout, well-mannered and well-disciplined!

How sad and afflicting to see them walking disorderly, and not practicing the things that they are called to!

How mischievous it is to neglect the purpose of their vocation, and turn their minds to what is not their business!

6. Do thou be mindful of the purpose thou hast undertaken, and place before thee the image of the Crucified.

Well mayst thou be ashamed when looking into the life of Jesus Christ, that as yet thou hast not studied more to conform thyself to Him, long as thou hast been in the way of God.

The religious who exerciseth himself earnestly and devoutly in the most holy life and Passion of our Lord, shall find there abundantly all that is useful and necessary for him; nor need he seek out of Jesus for anything better.

Oh, if the crucified Jesus should come into our heart, how quickly and sufficiently learned should we be!

7. The fervent religious beareth and taketh all things well, whatever he is commanded.

The negligent and lukewarm religious hath trouble upon trouble, and endureth anguish on every side; for he has no consolation within, and is forbidden to seek it without.

The religious that liveth out of discipline is exposed to dreadful ruin.

He that is seeking to be more free and unrestrained will always be in trouble, for one thing or other will ever disgust him.

8. How do so many other religious, who live most strictly under the cloistered discipline? They seldom go abroad, they live retired, they are fed on the very poorest, they are coarsely clad, they labor much, they talk little, they keep late vigils, they rise early, they spend much time in prayer, they read frequently, and keep themselves in all discipline.

Consider the Carthusians and the Cistercians, and the monks and nuns of other religious orders, how they rise every night to sing praises to the Lord! And what a shame it would be for thee to grow slothful at such a time, when so great a multitude of religious are beginning to sing aloud with joy to God!

9. Oh, if there were nothing else to do, but praise the Lord our God with all our heart and voice! Oh, if thou didst never require to eat, or drink, or sleep, but couldst be always praising God, and occupied with spiritual pursuits only, then thou wouldst be much happier than now, since thou art a slave to the flesh from necessities of every kind.

Would to God that there were none of these necessities, but only spiritual reflections required for the soul. These, alas, it is seldom enough we taste!

10. When a man hath arrived so far, that he seeks his consolation from no created thing, then first doth he begin truly to taste what God is; then, too,

will he be well content with everything that happens.

Then will he neither rejoice for much nor be sorrowful for little, but will commit himself wholly and confidingly to God, Who is to him all in all: to Whom nothing is lost or dieth, but for Whom all things live, and at Whose call they instantly obey.

11. Ever keep in mind thine end, and that time lost returneth no more.

Without care and diligence thou shalt never acquire virtues.

If once thou beginnest to grow lukewarm, thou beginnest to be in a bad state.

But if thou give thyself to fervor thou shalt find great peace; and thou shalt feel thy labor light, through the grace of God, and for the love of virtue.

The fervent and diligent man is ready for all things.

It is harder labor to withstand our vices and passions than to toil at bodily labors.

He that shunneth not small defects, by little and little falleth into greater.

Thou wilt always be glad in the evening if thou spend the day profitably.

Watch over thyself, stir up thyself; admonish thyself, and whatever may become of others, neglect not thyself.

In proportion as thou dost violence to thyself, the greater progress wilt thou make. Amen.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

ACCORDING to our zeal for advancement, we take advantage of the good we see to practice it, and carry us to God. To advance in virtue, we must overcome and renounce ourselves in all things, and die to the insatiable desires of our heart. It is certain that we can merit in the service of God only in proportion as we do violence to ourselves. Wherefore, let us fight against and subdue the irregular inclinations which allure us to sin or to relaxation of our fervor: by this means we shall secure our salvation. A vigorous, constant, and generous effort to overcome ourselves, forwards us more in the ways of perfection and salvation than those fruitless desires by which we would give ourselves to God, yet we do not what we would. The more we die to ourselves, the more do we live to God: and the more we refuse to gratify ourselves, so much the more do we please Him. How delightful

must the life of that Christian be whose desires are so regulated that his chief happiness is in denying himself, and pleasing God! How sure a means of obtaining a happy eternity!

PRAYER

THOU knowest, O Jesus, the extreme difficulty we experience in subduing and subjecting ourselves to Thee; suffer not this difficulty to hinder us from accomplishing it. It is just we should prefer Thy glory, and Thy holy will, to our own will and gratification, and hence we are resolved to do so. Strengthen us in this resolution, and make us faithful. Grant that all in us may yield to Thee, that, advancing daily in virtue, and leading a supernatural and, through Thy merits, an acceptable life, we may become worthy of Thy grace here, and of Thine eternal glory hereafter. Amen.

BOOK II

CHAPTER 1

OF INTERIOR CONVERSATION

THE kingdom of God is within you, saith the Lord.

Turn thee unto the Lord with thy whole heart, and quit this miserable world, and thy soul shall find rest.

Learn to slight exterior things, and to give thyself to interior things, and thou shalt see the kingdom of God come within thee.

The kingdom of God is peace and joy in the Holy Ghost; which is not given to the wicked.

Christ will come to thee, and discover His consolation to thee, if thou wilt prepare for Him a fit dwelling within thee.

All His glory and beauty are from within; and there it is that He taketh delight.

Many are His visits to the man of interior life, and sweet the conversation that He holdeth with him; plenteous His consolation, His peace, and His familiarity.

2. Come, then, faithful soul, make thy heart ready for this Spouse, so that He may vouchsafe to come to thee and to dwell within thee.

For so He saith: "If any man love Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him; We will come to him, and make Our abode with him."

Give admittance, therefore, to Christ, and refuse entrance to all beside.

When thou hast Christ, thou art rich, and He is sufficient for thee.

He will provide for thee, and be thy faithful procurator in all things; so that thou needest not to trust in men.

For men soon change, and they quickly fail; but Christ abideth forever, and standeth by us firmly to the end.

3. No great confidence must we place in frail and mortal man, useful though he be, and dearly beloved; nor shouldst thou be much grieved if he

sometimes oppose and contradict thee.

They that today are with thee, tomorrow may be against thee; and they often change to the contrary, like the wind.

Put thy whole trust in God, and let Him be thy fear and thy love.

He will answer for thee, and will graciously do for thee as shall be best.

Here thou hast no abiding city; and wherever thou shalt be, thou art a stranger and a pilgrim; nor wilt thou ever have rest, except thou be interiorly united with Christ.

4. Why dost thou stand looking about thee here, since this is not the place of thy rest?

Thine abode must be in Heaven, and thou shouldst look upon all earthly things as it were in passing.

All things pass away, and thou too, along with them.

See thou cleave not to them, lest thou be ensnared, and perish.

Let thy thoughts be with the Most High, and let thy prayers be sent forth without ceasing unto Christ.

If thou knowest not how to meditate on high and heavenly things, rest in the Passion of Christ, and love to dwell within His sacred Wounds.

For if thou devoutly betake thyself to the Wounds and precious stigmas of Jesus, thou shalt feel great comfort in tribulation; thou wilt not care much for being slighted by men, and wilt easily bear the speeches of detractors.

5. Christ also was despised by men in the world, and in His greatest need He was, by His acquaintance and His friends, forsaken amidst insults. Christ was willing to suffer and to be despised, and darest thou complain of aught?

Christ had enemies and detractors, and wouldst thou have all to be thy friends and benefactors?

Whence shall thy patience be crowned, if thou meet with no adversity?

If thou wilt suffer no contradiction, how canst thou be the friend of Christ?

Endure with Christ, and for Christ, if thou wouldst reign with Christ.

6. If thou hadst once perfectly entered into the interior of Jesus, and tasted a little of His ardent love; then wouldst thou care but little for thine own convenience or inconvenience; but wouldst rather rejoice at reproach; for the love of Jesus maketh a man despise himself.

A lover of Jesus and the truth, a true interior person, who is free from inordinate affections, can freely turn himself to God, elevate himself above himself in spirit, and enjoy a delightful repose.

7. He whose taste discerneth all things as they are, and not as they are said or accounted to be, is truly a wise man, and taught rather of God than of men.

He that knoweth how to walk interiorly, and to make but little account of things exteriorly, doth not look for places nor wait for seasons to perform exercises of devotion.

The man of interior life soon recollecteth himself, because he never wholly poureth forth himself upon exterior things.

Exterior labor is no prejudice to him, nor any employment necessary for the time; but as things happen, so he accommodateth himself to them.

He who is well disposed and orderly in his interior is not concerned about the strange and perverse doings of men.

Just so much is a man hindered and distracted in proportion as he draws things to himself.

8. If all were right within thee, and thou wert well purified, all things would tend to thy good and thy profit.

The reason why many things displease thee, and oftentimes disturb thee, is, that thou art not yet perfectly dead to thyself, nor detached from earthly things.

There is nothing that so defileth and entangleth the heart of man as an impure attachment to created things.

If thou wilt refuse exterior consolations, then shalt thou be able to apply thy mind to heavenly things, and experience frequent interior joy.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

“CONVERT thyself with thy whole heart to the Lord. Learn to despise the exterior things, and give thyself to the interior.” These words teach us that the true happiness and only merit of this life consist in retirement and recollection in God, which are maintained by means of a respectful remembrance of His presence, and a continual turning of souls towards Him. A recollected mind and a faithful heart form the character of an interior man who adores God in spirit and in truth—that is, who pays Him

that interior homage which becometh His sovereign greatness, and is so necessary for a soul whose sole business is to live in God and for God. It is this abiding of God in the soul, this establishment of the soul in God, by raising itself up to Him in sighs and lamentations, and by casting its whole self upon Him, which enables it to live an interior life, a life of merit, and above nature, which is heaven upon earth, and an anticipated possession of the felicity of God. I am resolved, therefore, to mortify my senses, to banish from my mind all vain and useless reflections, and to keep a strict guard over my heart, that nothing may enter therein but what will promote the fear and love of Jesus Christ. Everything else shall be to me as though it were not; and I will endeavor, above all things, to know, love and imitate my Redeemer, content to suffer all for Him and in Him, that I may one day reign with Him! O my soul! breathe only His love, live only to please Him, sigh only for the happiness of possessing Him.

PRAYER

O MY most amiable Savior! the life of my soul, the only object of my hope, and the assurance of my salvation! Come, take possession of my heart, which is already Thine, infuse into it the spirit of Thy mysteries, Thine interior dispositions, and the virtues which Thou didst practice. Grant that, animated by Thy Spirit, living in and by Thee, and, as it were, clothed with Thy justice, I may become more Thine than my own. Mayst Thou live in me: and may I, by a happy transmutation, yielding myself entirely to Thee, act only from the influences of Thy love. Amen.

CHAPTER 2

OF HUMBLE SUBMISSION

MAKE no great account of who may be for thee or against thee, but mind and take care that God be with thee in everything thou dost.

Have a good conscience, and God will sufficiently defend thee; for he whom God will help, no man's malice can hurt.

If thou knowest only how to be silent and to endure, doubt not that thou shalt experience help from the Lord.

He knoweth the time and the manner of thy deliverance; and, therefore, it is thy part to resign thyself into His hands.

It belongs to God to help us and deliver us from all confusion.

Many a time it is a great advantage to us, for the keeping us in greater humility, that others know and reprehend our faults.

2. When a man humbleth himself for his faults, then he really pacifieth others, and easily satisfieth those who are angry with him.

The humble man God protecteth and delivereth; the humble He loveth and consoleth; to the humble He inclineth Himself; on the humble He bestoweth bounteous grace; and after he hath been brought low, raiseth him up unto glory.

To the humble He revealeth His secrets, and sweetly inviteth and draweth him unto Himself.

The humble man, in the midst of reproaches, remaineth in great peace; for his dependence is on God, and not on the world.

Never think that thou hast thyself made any progress until thou feel that thou art inferior to all.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

How easy it is, when we are approved of, esteemed, and praised by others, to say we are unworthy of such honor, and deserve only contempt! To know whether we speak the truth, let us see if we should say the same under contempt. Upon this point I am resolved to accept, as from the hands of God, all the evil that may be said or done against me, as my due; and, far from murmuring, I will bless the Lord for permitting others to do me justice, that He may show me mercy; esteeming it too great a happiness to die, and to be extinguished in the minds of men, that I may live only in the mind of God by the love of contempt, and the practice of true humility.

PRAYER

THOU knowest, O God, how sensible I am to contradictions, calumnies, and contempt. Everything revolts within me when I have occasion to suffer them. But I know also that what is impossible to me is easy to Thee, and that, supported and fortified by the help of Thy grace, I can patiently endure humiliations, which, of myself, I should receive with murmurs and vexation. Grant, then, O my Savior, that, imbued with Thy maxims, and animated with Thy Spirit, I may regard with horror the glory, esteem, and praise which so often render me contemptible in Thy sight; and, on the contrary, receive injuries and affronts with submission and gratitude, that so I may hope to become the object of Thy love and the possessor of eternal glory. Amen.

CHAPTER 3

OF THE GOOD PEACEABLE MAN

FIRST keep thyself in peace, and then shalt thou be able to bring others to peace.

The peaceable man does more good than one that is very learned.

The passionate man turneth even good to evil, and readily believeth evil.

The good peaceable man turneth all things unto good.

He that is in perfect peace suspecteth no man.

But he that is discontented and disturbed is agitated by various suspicions; he neither hath rest himself, nor suffereth others to rest.

Many a time he saith what he ought not to say, and leaveth undone that which it were best for him to do.

He considers what others ought to do, and neglecteth that which he is bound to do himself.

Have, therefore, a zeal in the first place over thyself, and then mayst thou also justly exercise zeal towards thy neighbor.

2. Thou knowest well how to excuse and gloss over thine own deeds, but thou wilt not accept the excuses of others.

It were more just for thee to accuse thyself, and to excuse thy brother.

If thou wishest to be borne with, bear also with others.

See how far thou yet art from true charity and humility; which knoweth not how to feel anger or indignation against anyone but one's self.

It is no great thing to associate with the good and the gentle: for this is naturally pleasing to all, and everyone preferreth peace and loveth best those that have like sentiments.

But to be able to live peacefully with the hard and the perverse, or with the undisciplined and those who contradict us, is a great grace, and a highly commendable and manly thing.

3. Some there are who keep themselves in peace, and have peace also with others; and there are some who neither have peace themselves, nor leave others in peace; they are troublesome to others, and still more troublesome to themselves.

And there are those who keep themselves in peace, and study to restore peace to others.

Nevertheless, all our peace in this miserable life must be placed rather in humble endurance than in not experiencing oppositions.

He who best knows how to endure will possess the greater peace.

Such a one is conqueror of himself and lord of the world, the friend of Christ and an heir of Heaven.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

GRANTING the principle laid down in this chapter, that true peace consists much more in humbly submitting to what is contrary to our inclinations, than in meeting with nothing to thwart them, we must resolve to keep peace in contradictions, and to be calm in the midst of storms, patiently and meekly enduring persecution and all the evil that others may do or say against us. A soul that is truly humble complains only of itself; it endeavors to excuse others, while it blames itself, and is angry with no one but itself. I am resolved, therefore, to live in peace with God, by obeying Him in all things; in peace with my neighbor, by not censuring his conduct or interfering with his affairs: and in peace with myself, by combating and subduing, on all occasions, the emotions and repugnances of my heart.

PRAYER

THOU hast said, O Lord, by the mouth of Thy Prophet, “Seek after peace and pursue it”—that is, cease not to seek it until thou hast found it. Only Thou, my Jesus, canst bestow it upon me, for Thou alone didst accomplish my peace and reconciliation with Thy Father upon the Cross. I have long sought to live in peace with Thee, with my neighbor, and with myself; but my infidelities, my selfish feelings, and the sallies of passion are causes of perpetual trouble to my soul, and hinder me from tasting its sweets. O my Savior, Thou Who didst calm the tempests, Thou Whom the winds and the sea obeyed, calm the agitations of my troubled soul, which can nowhere

find true repose but in Thee. Grant that, resigning myself in all things to Thy blessed will, I may find peace and happiness in being, doing, quitting, and suffering whatever Thou shalt appoint. Amen.

CHAPTER 4

OF A PURE MIND AND A SIMPLE INTENTION

By two wings is man lifted above earthly things, viz., by simplicity and purity.

Simplicity must be in the intention, purity in the affection.

Simplicity aimeth at God, purity apprehendeth Him and tasteth Him.

No good work will be a hindrance to thee, provided thou be free interiorly from all inordinate affection.

If thou aim at and seek after nothing else but the will of God and thy neighbor's benefit, then shalt thou enjoy interior liberty.

If only thy heart were right, then every created thing would be to thee a mirror of life and a book of holy teaching.

There is no creature so little and so vile, that it showeth not forth the goodness of God.

2. If thou wert inwardly good and pure, then wouldst thou discern all things without impediment, and comprehend them well.

A pure heart penetrates Heaven and Hell.

According as every one is interiorly, so doth he judge exteriorly.

If there be joy in the world, truly the man of pure heart possesseth it.

And if there be anywhere tribulation and distress, an evil conscience doth the more readily experience it.

As iron cast into the fire loses its rust, and becomes all bright with burning, so the man that turneth himself wholly to God is divested of all sloth, and changed into a new man.

3. When a man beginneth to grow lukewarm, then he is afraid of a little labor, and willingly receiveth exterior consolation.

But when he beginneth perfectly to overcome himself, and to walk manfully in the way of God, then he maketh little account of things that before seemed to him grievous.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

PURITY of heart consists in detachment, from everything that can defile it. A voluntary fault, an unguarded glance of the eye, a turning away from God, imprint a blemish upon the soul which defaces its beauty, and disfigures it in the sight of God. “Blessed,” says Jesus Christ, “are the clean of heart, for they shall see God.” They shall know Him, by a lively and experimental faith in this life, which shall enable them to support the invisible things of God as though they were present to their sight; and in the next life they shall see Him by the light of His glory. We must, therefore, be determined, as far as we are able, not to commit any known sin, much less to contract a habit of any that can sully the purity of the soul and make it a slave to self-love, endear it to the pleasures of sense, and render it incapable of elevating itself towards God. We must, moreover, in order to obtain this purity of heart, incessantly ask it of God, saying with the Psalmists, “Create a clean heart in me, O God, and renew a right spirit within my bowels;” that is, a pure intention, by which I may seek only to please Thee in and before all things. In a word, we must be attached to nothing but God and His holy will; for all attachment to creatures tarnishes the beauty of the soul and renders it incapable and unworthy of being united with its God.

PRAYER

O JESUS, WHO hast so strongly recommended us, in the Gospel, to become humble, and simple as little children, if we would enter into the kingdom of Heaven, grant us that state of holy and spiritual infancy; and the simplicity of mind and purity of heart, which may make us worthy of Thy love. Amen.

CHAPTER 5

OF SELF-CONSIDERATION

WE may not trust too much to ourselves; for grace and understanding are often wanting to us.

There is in us but little light, and this we soon lose by negligence.

Oftentimes we are quite unconscious how interiorly blind we are.

We often do amiss, and do worse in excusing ourselves.

Sometimes we are moved by passion, and think it zeal.

We blame little things in others, and overlook great things in ourselves.

We are quick enough in perceiving and weighing what we bear from others; but we think little of what others have to bear from us.

He that should well and justly weigh his own doings would find little cause to judge harshly of another.

2. The interior man regardeth the care of himself before all other cares; and he that looketh diligently to himself findeth it not difficult to be silent about others.

Thou wilt never be interior and devout unless thou pass over in silence other men's affairs, and look especially to thyself.

If thou attend wholly to thyself and to God, what thou seest abroad will affect thee but little.

Where art thou when thou art absent from thyself?

And when thou hast run over all things, what hath it profited thee if thou hast neglected thyself?

If thou wouldst have true peace and perfect union, thou must cast all things else aside, and keep thine eyes upon thyself alone.

3. Thou wilt make great progress, if thou keep thyself free from every temporal anxiety.

Thou wilt fall back exceedingly, if thou make account of anything temporal.

Let there be nothing great, nothing high, nothing pleasant, nothing acceptable to thee but only God Himself, or what comes from God.

Think it all vanity, whatever consolation thou mayst meet with from any creature.

The soul that loveth God despiseth all things that are less than God.

God only, the eternal and infinite, Who filleth all things, is the solace of the soul and the true joy of the heart.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

USELESS reflections upon ourselves and upon exterior things occasion us to lose much time, many graces, and much merit. Did we but endeavor to substitute a respectful remembrance of God, in place of a vain and hurtful attention to ourselves and to creatures, we should be always well employed. To consider God as within us, and ourselves as existing in God, to live under the eye of Jesus Christ by means of recollection, in His hands by resignation, and at His feet by humility and a sincere acknowledgment of our miseries, is to live really as Christians; for we can only be such in proportion as we are devoted to Jesus Christ. Why then are we so much and so frequently attracted by news, curiosities, and vanity, and so little interested in God, our duties, and our salvation? It is because we are indifferent to the things of eternity, and so much attached to those which pass away with time. Let us, therefore, begin to be now what we hope to be forever—occupied only with God, in God, and for God.

PRAYER

CORRECT in me, O Lord, that indolence of mind in which I squander away my time with trifles, and that uselessness of thought which withdraws me from the enjoyment of Thy presence, and distracts my attention in the time of prayer; if, when I recite my prayers, I cannot always think of Thee, grant that my distractions may not be voluntary, so that whilst they divert my mind, they may never withdraw my heart from Thee. Teach me, O Lord, before prayer, to prepare my soul, that, urged by my many necessities, and by a desire of pleasing Thee, I may fulfill this important duty when a

becoming sense of Thine awful presence, and of the subject on which I seek relief from Thy bounty and mercy. Amen.

CHAPTER 6

OF THE JOY OF A GOOD CONSCIENCE

THE good man's glory is the testimony of a good conscience.

Have a good conscience, and thou shalt always have joy.

A good conscience can bear very much, and is very joyful in the midst of adversity.

An evil conscience is always fearful and unquiet; sweetly shalt thou rest, if thy heart upbraid thee not.

Never rejoice except when thou hast done well.

The wicked never have true joy, nor feel interior peace; for "there is no peace to the wicked," saith the Lord.

And if they say: We are in peace, and there shall no evil come upon us, and who is there who shall dare to harm us?

Believe them not; for suddenly the anger of God shall arise, and bring their deeds to nought, and their thoughts shall perish.

2. To glory in tribulation is not hard to him that loves; for so to glory is to glory in the Cross of the Lord.

Short-lived is the glory that is given and received by men.

Sadness ever accompanieth the glory of this world.

The glory of the good is in their own consciences, and not in the mouth of men.

The joy of the just is from God and in God, and their rejoicing is in the truth.

He that longeth after true and everlasting glory careth not for the temporal.

And he that seeketh temporal glory, or doth not from his soul despise it, shows himself to have little love for that which is heavenly.

Great tranquillity of heart hath he who careth neither for praise nor blame.

3. Easily will he be content and at peace whose conscience is undefiled.

Thou art not more holy for being praised, nor the worse for being blamed.

What thou art, that thou art; nor canst thou be said to be greater than God seeth thee to be.

If thou attend diligently to what thou art interiorly, thou wilt not regard what men say of thee.

Man looketh on the face, but God seeth into the heart.

Man considereth the actions, but God weigheth the intentions.

Always to do well, and to esteem one's self of small account, is the mark of a humble soul.

To refuse consolation from any creature is the sign of great purity and of an interior confidence.

4. He that seeketh no outward testimony for himself, showeth plainly that he hath wholly committed himself to God.

“For not he that commendeth himself,” saith blessed Paul, “is approved, but he whom God commendeth.”

To walk with God within, and to be bound by no affection from without, is the state of the man of interior life.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

THE peace of a good conscience does not always exclude those troubles which are occasioned by temptations and interior trials; but in all the storms which arise, it keeps the heart submissive and faithful to God; submissive in suffering pain, and faithful in not yielding under it, but in resisting, in fighting, and in neglecting nothing on account of it. Thus it is that a suffering and submissive soul is, according to the royal Prophet, an acceptable sacrifice to God, Who never rejects a contrite and humble heart—humble from the experience of its own miseries, and contrite for having given cause to God to oblige it to experience them. Let us, therefore, form a strong and constant resolution not to suffer ourselves to be discouraged, either by our falls or by our trials, or by the experience of our miseries; but to humble ourselves before God, at the sight of our wretchedness; to crave

pardon for the faults we have committed through not resisting, as we ought to have done, the enemy of our salvation; to punish ourselves immediately for them by some act of mortification; and, after that, to remain in peace; for a good conscience is that which is either exempt from sin by fidelity, or cleansed from it by repentance.

PRAYER

THOU knowest, O Lord, to how many sinful allurements, interior trials, and dangers we are exposed, both from natural and violent inclinations to evil; our unceasing repugnance to good, and the assaults of temptation. How shall we be able to resist so many and such powerful enemies, bent as they are upon our destruction, if Thou in Thy bounty assist us not? It is to Thee we raise up our hearts and our minds, it is to Thee we look for succor to keep us from yielding to temptation, to deliver us from the greatest of all evils, sin, and to preserve us from perishing everlastingly. Amen.

CHAPTER 7

OF THE LOVE OF JESUS ABOVE ALL THINGS

BLESSED is he who understandeth what it is to love Jesus, and to despise himself for the sake of Jesus.

We must leave what is beloved for the sake of the Beloved; for Jesus will be loved alone and above all things.

The love of things created is deceitful and inconstant; the love of Jesus is faithful and enduring.

He that clingeth to the creature shall fall with its falling.

He that embraceth Jesus shall be firmly rooted forever.

Love Him, and keep Him for thy friend, Who, when all forsake, will not leave thee, nor suffer thee to perish finally.

Sooner or later thou must be separated from all, whether thou wilt or no.

2. In life and in death keep thyself near to Jesus, and entrust thyself to His fidelity, Who alone can help thee when all others fail.

The nature of thy Beloved is such that He will not admit of a rival; but He will have thy heart for Himself alone, and sit as a king upon His Own throne.

If thou couldst empty thy heart of every creature, Jesus would willingly make His dwelling with thee.

Whatsoever thou reposest in men, out of Jesus, thou wilt find to be well nigh lost.

Trust not, nor lean upon a reed full of wind. "For all flesh is grass, and all the glory thereof shall fade like the flower of grass."

3. Thou wilt soon be deceived, if thou regard only the external appearance of men. Indeed, if thou seek in others thy comfort and thy

profit, thou wilt more often meet with loss.

If in all things thou seekest Jesus, truly thou shalt find Jesus; but if thou seek thyself, thou shalt find thyself also, but to thine own ruin.

For if a man seek not Jesus, he doth himself more harm than the whole world and all his enemies can do him.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

APPLY thy whole mind to know Jesus Christ, thy whole heart to love Him, and all thy care to follow Him, since for this alone thou art a Christian. What difficulty canst thou have in loving a Man-God, Who assumed humanity only for love of thee and for thy salvation! Be then resolved to study and to contemplate Him in all His actions, to penetrate into His designs, to enter into His dispositions and the purport of His mysteries; and endeavor to do, to suffer, and to live as He did; for the whole merit of a Christian in this life consists in conformity in all things with Jesus Christ; and, in the next, it will constitute his never-ending happiness. If he endeavor to participate here in the humble and suffering life of his Redeemer, he will hereafter partake of His glorious immortality.

PRAYER

AS, O Jesus, I can have no pretensions to Heaven but through Thy virtues and merit, I beseech Thee to inspire me with an ardent desire of knowing and following Thee. Grant, O my most amiable Savior, that I may follow Thy maxims, practice Thy virtues, and form myself upon Thine example, that my resemblance to Thee may make me worthy of Thy love, and cause me to find grace in the sight of Thy heavenly Father, Who loves us only in proportion as we resemble Thee. Help me then to become imbued with Thy sentiments, and conformed to Thine inclinations. Grant that, after Thine example, I may become meek, humble patient, charitable, and submissive in all things to Thy Father's will. I hope that, presenting myself to Him in and by Thee, I shall not be rejected, and that the attachment which I desire to have for Thee may secure Thy love for me, and my ultimate salvation. Amen.

CHAPTER 8

OF FAMILIAR FRIENDSHIP WITH JESUS

WHEN Jesus is present all is well, and nothing seems difficult; but when Jesus is absent, everything is hard.

When Jesus speaketh not within, consolation is little worth; but if Jesus speaks only one word, we feel great consolation.

Did not Mary Magdalen instantly rise up from the place where she wept, when Martha said to her: “The Master is come, and calleth for thee?”

Happy hour, when Jesus calleth thee from tears to joy of spirit.

How dry and hard art thou without Jesus! How foolish and vain, if thou desire anything out of Jesus!

Is not this a greater loss to thee than if thou shouldst lose the whole world?

2. What can the world give thee without Jesus?

To be without Jesus is a grievous Hell; to be with Jesus a sweet Paradise.

If Jesus be with thee, no foe can harm thee.

Whoever findeth Jesus, findeth a good treasure—yea, a good above every good.

And he that loseth Jesus loseth much—yea, more than the whole world.

He that liveth without Jesus is in wretched poverty; and he who is with Jesus is most rich.

3. It is a great art to know how to converse with Jesus; and to know how to keep Jesus is great wisdom.

Be humble and peaceable, and Jesus will be with thee.

Be devout and calm, and Jesus will abide with thee.

Thou mayst soon drive away Jesus, and lose His grace, if thou wilt turn aside after outward things.

And if thou drive Him from thee and lose Him, to whom wilt thou fly? and whom, then, wilt thou seek for thy friend?

Without a friend, thou canst not live happily; and if Jesus be not a friend to thee above all, thou wilt indeed be sad and desolate.

Thou dost foolishly, therefore, to trust in any other, or to rejoice in any other.

We ought rather to choose to have the whole world against us than to offend Jesus.

Of all, therefore, that are dear to thee, let Jesus be thy special beloved.

4. Let all be loved for Jesus' sake, but Jesus for His Own sake.

Jesus Christ alone is singly to be loved; for He alone is found good and faithful above all friends.

For His sake, and in Him, let enemies as well as friends be dear to thee; and for all these thou must pray to Him, that all may know and love Him.

Never desire to be singly praised or beloved; for this belongeth to God alone, Who hath none like unto Himself.

Neither desire that anyone's heart should be much taken up with thee; nor do thou be much taken up with the love of anyone; but let Jesus be in thee, and in every good man.

5. Be pure and free interiorly, without being entangled by any creature.

Thou must be naked and bear a pure heart towards God, if thou wilt be free, and experience how sweet the Lord is.

And, indeed, thou wilt never attain to this, unless thou be prevented and drawn by His grace, that so thou mayst be united to Him alone, when thou hast cast out and dismissed all others.

For when the grace of God cometh to a man, then is he powerful for all things; and when it departeth, then is he poor and weak, and left only, as it were, to scourgings.

In these circumstances, he must not be dejected nor despair; but calmly remain, awaiting the will of God, and bear, for the glory of Jesus Christ, whatever shall befall him: because, after the winter cometh summer, after the night the day returneth, after the storm cometh a great calm.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

IT is difficult to live without some one to whom we can open our hearts and confide our secrets. But to whom can we better disclose them than to Jesus, Who, more than all others, is a friend the most faithful, the most constant, and the most worthy of our confidence! Seek, therefore, in Him alone thy consolation and thy peace; lay open thy heart incessantly before Him; have recourse to Him in all thy troubles: and be not discouraged if He seem to hide His countenance, for this is only the effect of His love towards thee, and the trial of thy fidelity towards Him. Pray, entreat, and conjure Him in His bounty to assist thee; and be assured that, sooner or later, thou wilt experience the effects of His goodness. Preserve thy heart free for Him, and detached from every creature: love Him for the sake of His Own infinite perfections; and love all things else only as they lead thee to Him and to His love. Let pains, injuries, sorrows, and humiliations become as welcome to thee as they were to Jesus Christ; and let the esteem and the praises of men be to thee objects of dread and contempt, because they were so to Him. In a word, accustom thyself to know Him, to speak to Him, to love Him, and seek to please Him in all things, that, living thus in the exercise of His love, the last motion of thy heart may be an act of the love of thy dearest Redeemer.

PRAYER

As Thy love for me, O Jesus, is a prevenient love, and as Thou makest me worthy of Thy love, by first loving me, attract and gain my heart, and confirm it in Thy love. Grant that, detached from all things, and uninfluenced by the allurements of self-love, I may breathe only Thy love; that I may be engaged with Thee alone, and attentive only to Thee, and neither seek nor love anything but Thee alone, in all things. Be Thou, my most amiable Savior, the reigning object and sovereign good of my soul. Grant that, animated by Thy spirit, formed upon Thy example, faithful to Thy graces, and obedient to Thy orders, I may live for Thee, from Thee, and like Thee, in order to commence that occupation on earth which I hope to continue in Heaven, which is to possess and to love Thee. Amen.

CHAPTER 9

OF THE WANT OF ALL CONSOLATION

IT is not hard to despise all human consolation when we have Divine.

But it is much, and very much, to be able to forego all comfort, both human and Divine, and to be willing to bear this interior banishment for God's honor, and to seek one's self in nothing, nor to think of one's own merit.

What so great thing is it if thou be cheerful and devout when grace comes? This hour is desirable to all.

He rides pleasantly enough who is carried by the grace of God.

And what wonder if he feel no weight who is borne up by the Almighty, and led on by the Sovereign Guide.

2. We love to have something to comfort us, and it is with difficulty that a man can put off himself.

The holy Martyr, Lawrence, with his priest, overcame the world, because he despised whatever seemed delightful in this world; and for the love of Christ he suffered the high priest of God, Sixtus, whom he exceedingly loved, to be taken away from him.

He overcame, therefore, the love of man by the love of the Creator; and instead of the consolation he had in man, he made choice rather of God's good pleasure.

So do thou also learn to part with an intimate and beloved friend for the love of God. And take it not to heart when thou art forsaken by a friend, knowing that at last we must all be separated one from another.

3. A man must have a great and a long conflict within himself before he can learn fully to overcome himself, and to direct his whole affection towards God.

When a man stands upon himself, he easily inclines after human consolations.

But a true lover of Christ, and a diligent pursuer of virtue, does not fall back upon comforts, nor seek such sensible delights, but rather prefers hard exercises, and to sustain severe labors for Christ.

4. Therefore, when God gives spiritual consolation, receive it with thanksgiving; but know that it is God's free gift, and no merit of thine.

Be not lifted up, be not overjoyed, nor vainly presume, but rather be the more humble for this gift, more cautious, too, and fearful in all thine actions; for that hour will pass away, and temptation follow.

When consolation shall be taken away from thee, do not presently despair, but with humility and patience await the heavenly visitation, since God is able to restore to thee more abundant consolation.

This is no new nor strange occurrence to those who have known the way of God; for among the great Saints and ancient Prophets there has often been this kind of vicissitude.

5. Hence there was one who, when grace was with him, exclaimed: "I said in my abundance, I shall not be moved forever."

But when grace was withdrawn, he tells what he experienced in himself, saying: "Thou hast turned away Thy face from me, and I became troubled."

Yet even then he despaireth not, but more earnestly prayeth to the Lord, and saith: "Unto Thee, O Lord, will I cry, and to my God will I make supplication."

At length he receiveth the fruit of his prayer, and witnesseth that he was heard, saying: "The Lord hath heard, and hath had mercy on me: the Lord hath become my helper."

But in what way? "Thou hast turned," he saith, "my mourning into joy, and Thou hast encompassed me with gladness."

If it hath been thus with great Saints, we that are weak and poor must not be discouraged if we are sometimes fervent, sometimes cold, because the Spirit cometh and goeth according to His Own good pleasure.

Wherefore holy Job saith: "Thou visitest him early in the morning, and on a sudden Thou triest him."

6. Wherein, then, can I hope, or in what must I put my trust, but in God's great mercy alone, and in the hope of heavenly grace?

For whether I have with me good men, or devout brethren, or faithful friends, or holy books, or beautiful treatises, or sweet canticles and hymns, all these help but little, give me but little relish, when I am forsaken by grace and left in my own poverty.

At such a time there is no better remedy than patience, and denying of myself according to the will of God.

7. I never found anyone so religious and devout as not sometimes to experience a withdrawal of grace, or feel a diminution of fervor.

No Saint was ever so sublimely rapt and illuminated as not to be tempted sooner or later.

For he is not worthy the sublime contemplation of God, who has not, for God's sake, been exercised with some tribulation.

For preceding temptation is usually a sign of ensuing consolation.

For heavenly comfort is promised to such as have been proved by temptation.

“To him that shall overcome,” saith the Lord, “I will give to eat of the tree of life.”

8. Now Divine consolation is given, that a man may the better be able to support adversities.

And temptation followeth, that he may not be elated by the good.

The devil sleepeth not, neither is the flesh yet dead; therefore thou must not cease to prepare thyself for the battle; for on the right hand and on the left are enemies that never rest.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

As we approach to God by faith, and not by the senses, and as faith of itself is dry and obscure, we must not be surprised if we sometimes experience dryness and desolation, and at other times consolation and joy. All consists in receiving consolation with humility, and in supporting desolation with fortitude and courage. “Silver and gold,” says the Wise Man, “are tried in the fire;” and souls, before they can become worthy of being admitted to an intimate friendship with God, are tried in the furnace of the most painful and humiliating tribulations. Humble, then, thy heart, under the all-powerful hand of God, and bear with patience the trials of the Lord, Who, by the temptations which we resist, makes us little, humble, and dependent upon

Him, and would have us, in imitation of the holy Martyrs, love Him in suffering, suffer in loving Him, and honor His greatness by our entire destruction of self-love.

PRAYER

HOW happy are we, O Jesus, when we experience no pleasure nor satisfaction but in Thee! But how much more so when, although we receive neither consolation, nor delight, nor sensible gratification in Thy service, we still, in spite of all disgust, persevere in our spiritual exercises faithful to Thy grace. It is thus, O God, we prove that we love Thee for Thyself; that we seek not human comfort, but to please Thee; and that, dying to self-satisfaction, which is the natural life of the heart, we make it our delight to please Thee, and our true satisfaction to sacrifice our own for Thy love. It is just, O Lord, that I should prefer Thy holy will to my own inclinations, and that I should serve Thee more for Thyself than from any selfish motive. This I desire, O Jesus; but do Thou give me courage to accomplish it, and grant that henceforth I may prefer submission to Thy good pleasure before every other consolation. Amen.

CHAPTER 10

OF GRATITUDE FOR THE GRACE OF GOD

WHY seekest thou repose, since thou art born to labor?

Dispose thyself to patience, rather than to consolations; and to carrying the cross, rather than to gladness.

For who is there amongst those of the world that would not willingly receive comfort and spiritual joy, if he could obtain it at all times?

Spiritual consolations, indeed, exceed all the delights of the world and pleasures of the flesh.

For all worldly delights are either vain or impure; but spiritual delights alone are delightful and honorable, as they spring from virtue, and are infused by God into pure minds.

But these Divine consolations no man can always enjoy when he will, because the time of temptation is not long absent.

2. But what very much opposes these heavenly visits is a false liberty of mind, and a great confidence in one's self.

God doth well in giving the grace of consolation, but man doth ill in not returning it all to God with thanksgiving.

And this is the reason why the gifts of grace cannot flow in us, because we are ungrateful to the Giver, nor do we return all to the fountain-head.

For grace will be always given to him that duly returns thanks; and what is wont to be given to the humble, will be taken away from the proud.

3. I would not have any such consolation as robbeth me of compunction; nor do I wish to have such contemplation as leadeth to pride.

For all that is high is not holy; nor is every pleasant thing good; nor every desire pure; nor is everything that is dear to us pleasing to God.

I willingly accept of that grace which always maketh me more humble and fearful, and more ready to renounce myself.

He that hath been taught by the gift of grace, and instructed by the chastisement of its withdrawal, will not dare to attribute anything of good to himself, but will rather acknowledge himself to be poor and naked.

Give to God what is His, and ascribe to thyself what is thine—that is, give thanks to God for His grace; but as to thyself, be sensible that nothing is to be attributed to thee but sin, and the punishment sin deserveth.

4. Put thyself always in the lowest place, and the highest shall be given thee; for the highest standeth not without the lowest.

The Saints that are the highest in the sight of God are the least in their own eyes; and the more glorious they are, the more humble are they in themselves.

Full of truth and heavenly glory, they are not covetous of vain glory.

Being grounded and established in God, they can by no means be proud.

And they who attribute to God whatsoever good they have received, seek not glory from one another, but that glory which is from God alone; and they desire above all things that God may be praised in themselves, and in all the Saints, and to this they are always tending.

5. Be grateful, then, for the least, and thou shalt be worthy to receive greater things.

Let the least be to thee as something very great, and the most contemptible as a special favor.

If thou considerest the dignity of the Giver, no gift will seem little or too mean for thee. For that is not little which is given by the most high God.

Yea, though He give punishment and stripes, it ought to be acceptable; for whatever He suffereth to befall us, He always doth it for our salvation.

He that desireth to retain the grace of God, let him be thankful for grace when it is given, and patient when it is withdrawn.

Let him pray, that it may return; let him be cautious and humble, lest he lose it.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

Do not exalt thyself on account of the gifts of God, which are often a help to

thy weakness, always the effect of His bounty, and ordinarily above thy deserts.

When in the act of offending Him, thou perceivest thy heart touched at the sight of thine ingratitude and infidelity, thou oughtest to humble thyself and be confounded before Him at seeing Him so full of goodness and thyself so replete with wickedness.

Penetrated with a lively sorrow for having offended God, Who seeks thee even when thou art fleeing away from Him, and loads thee with His graces, even when thou provest thyself unworthy of them, return to Him by true repentance; ask pardon for thy fault, and think only of avenging Him by punishing thyself.

PRAYER

O GOD, Whose bounty is infinite, and Whose mercies are proportioned to our miseries, permit us not to be so ungrateful as to forget Thy benefits, nor so unfaithful as to become unworthy of Thy graces. We acknowledge that we deserve only to be abandoned by Thee, we merit but Thy hatred and eternal torments; but we conjure Thee, O Savior, not to deal with us according to our deserts, but according to the multitude of Thy tender mercies, which Thou art ever desirous of imparting to us. Amen.

CHAPTER 11

OF THE SMALL NUMBER OF THE LOVERS OF THE CROSS OF JESUS

JESUS hath now many lovers of His heavenly kingdom, but few bearers of His Cross.

He hath many that are desirous of consolation, but few of tribulation.

He finds many companions of His table, but few of His abstinence.

All desire to rejoice with Him, but few are willing to endure anything for His sake.

Many follow Jesus to the breaking of bread, but few to the drinking of the chalice of His Passion.

Many reverence His miracles, but few follow the ignominy of His Cross.

Many love Jesus as long as they meet with no adversity; many praise Him and bless Him as long as they receive some consolations from Him.

But if Jesus hide Himself, and leave them for a little while, they either murmur or fall into excessive dejection.

2. But they that love Jesus for Jesus' sake, and not for the sake of some consolation of their own, bless Him no less in tribulation and anguish of heart than in the greatest consolation.

And if He should never give them consolation, yet would they always praise Him, and always give Him thanks.

3. Oh, how much is the pure love of Jesus able to do, when it is not mixed with any self-interest or self-love!

Are not all they to be called mercenaries who are ever seeking consolations!

Do not they prove themselves to be rather lovers of themselves than of Christ, who are always thinking of their own advantage and gain?

Where shall we find a man that is willing to serve God disinterestedly?

4. Seldom do we find anyone so spiritual as to be stripped of all things.

For who shall be able to find the man that is truly poor in spirit, and divested of attachment to all created things? “His voice is (as of things that are brought) from afar, and from the remotest coasts.”

If a man give his whole substance, still it is nothing.

And if he do great penance, it is but little.

And if he attain to all knowledge, he is far off still.

And if he have great virtue and very fervent devotion, there is still much wanting to him, namely, the one thing which is supremely necessary for him.

What is that? That having left all things else, he leave also himself, and wholly go out of himself, and retain nothing of self-love.

And when he shall have done all things which he knows he ought to do, let him think that he has done nothing.

5. Let him not make great account of that which may appear much to be esteemed; but let him in truth acknowledge himself to be an unprofitable servant; as the Truth Himself has said: “When ye shall have done all things that have been commanded you, say: ‘We are unprofitable servants.’”

Then may he be truly poor in spirit, and may say with the Psalmist: “I am alone and poor.”

Yet is there no one richer than such a man, none more powerful, none more free; who knoweth how to leave himself and all things, and to put himself in the very lowest place.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

How many Christians adore Jesus, poor in the manger, and suffering upon the Cross, who will neither submit to privation, nor endure tribulation for His sake! Yet He was born, and lived, and died in poverty and sufferings to teach us to renounce all things, and to bear our crosses with patience; to teach us, by His preaching and example, the virtues necessary for salvation, and to merit for us the grace to practice them. What will it avail thee to adore Jesus Christ, thy Savior and thy model, if thou dost not imitate Him and place thy whole confidence in Him? Take then the generous resolution of renouncing all things by depriving the senses of all dangerous or

unprofitable gratifications; by discarding from thy mind all vanity and self-complacency, and all malignity in condemning others; and by stripping thy heart of all attachment to self-satisfaction and self-seeking on all occasions. Carry this interior poverty and deprivation even so far as to renounce thine own will in all things, to desire only and to accomplish the will of God. It is by thus giving up thy whole self to God that thou wilt constitute Him the sole master and proprietor of thy heart, and by stripping thyself of all things here, make Him thine inheritance forever hereafter.

PRAYER

I CONCEIVE, O my Savior, an exalted idea of the bereavement Thou requirest of a Christian heart, since Thou dost oblige it to yield itself up entirely to Thee, and to substitute Thy love in place of the love of itself. But how far am I from practicing it, how incapable of it of myself! Help me, O Lord, to renounce and to die to myself in all things. Suffer not my heart to seek itself, since thou designest it to be entirely Thine. Grant that whenever it is tempted to live for, or to seek itself in anything, it may immediately renounce and die to itself, to live only in and for Thee. Then may I say with Thine Apostle: "Jesus Christ is my life, and it is gain for me to die to all, that I may live only in Him, and by Him, and for Him." Amen.

CHAPTER 12

OF THE ROYAL ROAD OF THE HOLY CROSS

TO many this seemeth a hard saying: “Deny thyself, take up thy cross, and follow Jesus.”

But it will be much harder to hear that last word: “Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.”

For they who now love to hear and follow the word of the Cross shall not then fear the sentence of eternal condemnation.

This Sign of the Cross shall be in Heaven when the Lord shall come to judge.

Then all the servants of the Cross, who in their lifetime have conformed themselves to Him that was crucified, shall come to Christ their Judge with great confidence.

2. Why, then, art thou afraid to take up thy cross, which leadeth to the kingdom?

In the cross is salvation; in the cross is life; in the cross is protection from enemies.

In the cross is infusion of heavenly sweetness; in the cross is strength of mind; in the cross is joy of spirit.

In the cross is height of virtue; in the cross is perfection of sanctity.

There is no health of soul, nor hope of eternal life, but in the cross.

Take up, therefore, thy cross, and follow Jesus, and thou shalt go into life everlasting.

He is gone before thee, carrying His Cross, and He died for thee upon the Cross, that thou mayst also bear thy cross, and love to die on the cross.

Because if thou die with Him, thou shalt also live with Him; and if thou art His companion in suffering, thou shalt also be His companion in glory.

3. Behold in the Cross all doth consist, and all lieth in our dying; and there is no other way to life and to true interior peace, but the way of the holy Cross, and of daily mortification.

Go where thou wilt, seek what thou wilt, and thou shalt not find a higher way above, nor a safer way below, than the way of the holy Cross.

Dispose and order all things according as thou wilt, and as seems best to thee, and thou wilt still find something to suffer, either willingly or unwillingly; and so thou shalt always find the cross.

For either thou shalt feel pain in the body, or sustain in thy soul tribulation of spirit.

4. Sometimes thou shalt be deserted by God: at other times shalt be afflicted by thy neighbor; and what is more, thou shalt often be a trouble to thyself.

Neither canst thou be delivered or eased by any remedy or comfort; but as long as it shall please God, thou must bear it.

For God willeth that thou learn to suffer tribulation without comfort, and wholly submit thyself to Him, and become more humble by tribulation.

No man hath so heartfelt a sense of the Passion of Christ as he whose lot it hath been to suffer like things.

The cross, therefore, is always ready, and everywhere awaiteth thee.

Thou canst not escape it, whithersoever thou runnest; for wheresoever thou goest, thou carriest thyself with thee, and shalt always find thyself.

Turn thyself upwards or turn thyself downwards; turn thyself inward or turn thyself outward; everywhere thou shalt find the cross.

And everywhere thou must of necessity hold fast patience, if thou desirest inward peace, and wouldst merit an eternal crown.

5. If thou carry the cross willingly, it will carry thee, and bring thee to thy desired end, namely, to that place where there will be an end of suffering, though here there will be no end.

If thou carry it unwillingly, thou makest it a burden to thee, and loadest thyself the more, and nevertheless thou must bear it.

If thou fling away one cross, without doubt thou wilt find another, and perhaps a heavier.

6. Dost thou think to escape that which no mortal ever could avoid? What Saint ever was in the world without his cross and tribulation?

For even our Lord Jesus Christ Himself was not for one hour of His life without the anguish of His Passion. “It behooved,” said He, “that Christ should suffer, and rise from the dead, and so enter into His glory.”

And how dost thou seek another way than this royal way, which is the way of the holy Cross?

7. The whole life of Christ was a Cross and a Martyrdom; and dost thou seek for thyself rest and joy?

Thou errest, thou errest, if thou seekest aught else than to suffer tribulation; for this whole mortal life is full of miseries, and everywhere marked with crosses.

And the higher a person is advanced in spirit, the heavier crosses shall he often meet with; because the pain of his banishment increaseth in proportion to his love.

8. Yet such a one, thus many ways afflicted, is not without some relief of consolation; because he is sensible of the very great profit he reaps by bearing the cross.

For whilst he willingly resigns himself to it, all the burden of tribulation is converted into an assured hope of comfort from God.

And the more the flesh is brought down by affliction, the more is the spirit strengthened by interior grace.

And sometimes he gaineth such strength through affection to tribulation and adversity, by his love of conformity to the Cross of Christ, as not to be willing to be without suffering and affliction; because such a one believeth himself to be so much the more acceptable to God, the more and more grievous things he shall have endured for His sake.

This is not man’s power, but the grace of Christ; which doth and can effect such great things in frail flesh, and that what it naturally abhors and flies, even this, through fervor of spirit, it now embraces and loves.

9. To bear the cross, to love the cross, to chastise the body and bring it under subjection; to fly honors, to love to suffer insults, to despise one’s self, and wish to be despised; to bear all adversities and losses, and to desire no prosperity in this world;—all this is not according to man’s natural inclination.

If thou lookest unto thyself, thou canst do nothing of this sort of thyself.

But if thou confidest in the Lord, strength will be given to thee from Heaven, and the world and the flesh shall be made subject to thee.

Neither shalt thou fear thine enemy, the devil, if thou art armed with faith, and signed with the Cross of Christ.

10. Set thyself, then, like a good and faithful servant of Christ, to bear manfully the Cross of thy Lord, for the love of Him Who was crucified for thee.

Prepare thyself to suffer many adversities, and divers evils, in this miserable life; for so it will be with thee, wherever thou art, and so indeed wilt thou find it, wheresoever thou hide thyself.

It must be so, and there is no remedy against tribulation and sorrow, but bear them patiently.

Drink of the chalice of thy Lord lovingly, if thou desirest to be His friend, and to have part with Him.

Leave consolations to God, to do with them as best pleaseth Him.

But be ready on thy part to bear tribulations, and account them the greatest consolations; for the sufferings of this life are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, although thou alone couldst suffer them all.

11. When thou shalt arrive thus far, that tribulation shall be sweet to thee, and thou shalt relish it for the love of Christ, then think that it is well with thee, for thou hast found a paradise upon earth.

As long as suffering is grievous to thee, and thou seekest to fly from it, so long shall it be ill with thee; and the (desire of) flying from tribulation shall pursue thee everywhere.

12. If thou set thyself to what thou oughtest, that is, to suffer and to die, it will quickly be better with thee, and thou shalt find peace.

Although thou shouldst have been rapt to the third heaven with St. Paul, thou art not thereby secured that thou shalt suffer no adversity: "I," said Jesus, "will show him how great things he must suffer for My Name."

To suffer, therefore, is what awaits thee, if thou art resolved to love Jesus, and constantly to serve Him.

13. Would to God thou wert worthy to suffer something for the Name of Jesus! how great glory would remain unto thyself! How great joy would it be to all the Saints of God! and how great edification to thy neighbor!

All recommend patience, but, alas, how few are there that desire to suffer!

With good reason oughtest thou willingly to suffer for Christ, since many suffer greater things for the world.

14. Know for certain that thou must lead a dying life; and the more a man dieth to himself, the more doth he begin to live unto God.

No man is fit to comprehend heavenly things who hath not resigned himself to suffer adversities for Christ.

Nothing is more acceptable to God, nothing more salutary for thee in this world, than to suffer willingly for Christ.

And if thou couldst make choice, thou oughtest to prefer to suffer adversities for Christ, than to be delighted with much consolation; because thus thou wouldst more resemble Christ, and be more likened to all the Saints.

For our merit, and the advancement of our state, consists not in having many sweetnesses and consolations; but rather in bearing great afflictions and tribulations.

If, indeed, there had been anything better, and more beneficial to man's salvation, than suffering, Christ certainly would have showed it by word and example.

For He manifestly exhorts both His disciples that followed Him, and all that desire to follow Him, to bear the cross, saying: "If anyone will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me."

So that when we have read and searched all, let this be the final conclusion, that "through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God."

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

CAN we read, believe, and ponder seriously the wonderful advantages of the cross, and the great merit of suffering, as here described, and not love to suffer, to receive crosses from the hands of Jesus Christ? And to submit to endure whatever He pleases, and as much as He pleases? Since to suffer much, and in a proper manner, is absolutely requisite for salvation, and is the most tender and efficacious effect of the goodness of God towards us, Who will not spare us the pains of time, that He may spare us those of

eternity. It is to bear the visible character of the predestinate, which, according to St. Paul, consists in our resemblance to Jesus Christ, an humble, suffering, and persecuted God; it is to render ourselves worthy of His life of glory by participating in His life of suffering; it is to efface the punishment due to our sins by perfect repentance; it is to gain the heart of Jesus Christ, merit His love, avenge Him, and punish ourselves, honor Him by our destruction, and prefer His good pleasure before our own satisfaction. Shall not all this console thee under affliction, and animate thee to bear it with becoming resignation? Say, then, in the time of suffering, in order not to fail: “Hell, which I have deserved, is something more horrible than anything I can now endure; my Savior has suffered much more for me; and heaven is worth infinitely more than I can undergo.”

PRAYER

PENETRATE my heart O Jesus, with these sentiments when Thou sendest me pain, and support me in all my afflictions: for, alas! Thou knowest how naturally I hate and fly from the cross, although I am persuaded that it was by the Cross Thou didst save me, and that I cannot gain salvation, nor enter into Heaven, but by the way of Calvary. Inspire me with that patience, that strength, and that courage which Thou didst impart to Thy Martyrs: and since I cannot better evince my love and gratitude towards Thee than by suffering for Thee, nor render myself more worthy of Thy grace and glory than by carrying the cross, vouchsafe to support me when sinking under its burden by the desire of pleasing Thee, and the hope of eternal happiness. Amen.

BOOK III

CHAPTER 1

OF THE INTERNAL DISCOURSE OF CHRIST TO A FAITHFUL SOUL

I WILL hear what the Lord God will speak in me.

Happy is the soul which heareth the Lord speaking within her, and receiveth from His mouth the word of comfort.

Happy ears which receive the breathings of the Divine whisper, and take not notice of the whisperings of this world.

Happy ears indeed which hearken not to the voice that soundeth without, but to the Truth itself teaching within.

Happy eyes which are shut to outward things, but intent on things internal.

Happy they who penetrate into internal things, and endeavor to prepare themselves more and more by daily exercises for the receiving of heavenly secrets.

Happy they who rejoice to be wholly intent on God, and who shake off every worldly impediment.

Consider these things, O my soul, and close up the doors of thy sensual desires; that thou mayst hear what the Lord thy God speaketh within thee.

2. Thus saith thy Beloved: "I am thy salvation, thy peace, and thy life.

"Keep thyself with Me, and thou shalt find peace."

Let go all transitory things: seek the eternal.

What are all things temporal but seductive snares? And what avail all created things, if thou be forsaken by the Creator?

Cast off, then, all earthly things, and make thyself pleasing to thy Creator, and faithful to Him, that so thou mayst lay hold on true happiness.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

THE soul disposes itself to hear what the Lord speaks to its interior, when, devoted to retirement, silence, and prayer, loving to be alone with its God, and seeking Him in itself, by a lively and reverential faith, it is attentive and faithful to the motions of His grace, to the interior influence of His presence, and to the attractions of His love. Thus, to maintain a spirit of recollection and of faithful love, ever to keep the mind attentive to the will of God, and the heart resolved to accomplish it, is effectually to dispose ourselves to hear God, and to receive the most intimate communications of His Spirit. God speaks to us incessantly by His inspirations, and the holy views He imparts to us, to engage us to die to ourselves, and to live only to Him. But either we do not hearken to Him, or it is only in a careless manner. When the soul is wholly given to the senses, agitated by the passions, and entirely taken up with exterior things, it is itself incapable and unworthy of the operations of God. We should, therefore, resolve to think and to speak but little to creatures, and to love silence and retirement, to nourish our minds with God's presence, and our hearts with His love, and to do all for Him and in His sight, if we would become interior men living in God, and for God, as every Christian should do who would be saved.

PRAYER

WEARIED with the demands of my senses, the tumult of my passions, and the inefficacy of my desires, I come to Thee, O Jesus, earnestly to implore Thee to recall my mind and my heart to their center, which is Thy presence and Thy love. I can no longer endure to live without Thee, my God; I can no longer remain a fugitive from Thy presence, nor banish myself from Thy heart. Ah! how frequently do my soul and the objects which surround me demand: "Where is thy God?" Everything speaks to me of Thee; yet nothing brings me to Thee. Thou art within me, and I seek Thee in exterior things, which dissipate my mind and remove me at a distance from Thee. O Life of my soul! the Center of my heart! the supreme and sovereign Object of my mind! When shall I see what I now believe? When shall I possess what I love? Grant that the moment Thy presence strikes my mind, all within my heart may fall prostrate and yield entirely to Thee. Amen.

CHAPTER 2

THAT TRUTH SPEAKETH WITHIN US WITHOUT NOISE OF WORDS

SPEAK, Lord, for Thy servant heareth. I am Thy servant; give me understanding, that I may know Thy testimonies.

Incline my heart to the words of Thy mouth; let Thy speech distill as the dew.

Heretofore the children of Israel said to Moses: “Speak thou to us, and we will hear; let not the Lord speak to us, lest we die.”

It is not thus, O Lord, it is not thus I pray, but rather, with the Prophet Samuel, I humbly and earnestly entreat: “Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth.”

Let not Moses, nor any of the Prophets, speak to me; but speak Thou rather, O Lord God, the Inspirer and Enlightener of all of the Prophets; for Thou alone, without them, canst perfectly instruct me; but they, without Thee, will avail me nothing.

2. They may indeed sound forth words, but they give not the spirit.

Most beautifully do they speak; but if Thou be silent, they inflame not the heart.

They give the letter, but Thou disclovest the sense.

They publish the mysteries, but Thou unlockest the meaning of the things signified.

They declare the Commandments, but Thou enablest us to fulfill them.

They show the way, but Thou givest strength to walk in it.

What they can do is only from without, but Thou instructest and enlightenest the heart.

They water outwardly, but Thou givest the increase.

They cry aloud in words, but Thou impartest understanding to the hearing.

3. Let not, then, Moses speak to me, but Thou, O Lord my God, the eternal Truth, lest I die and prove fruitless, if I be admonished only outwardly, and not inflamed within.

Lest it be to my condemnation that the word be heard and not fulfilled, known and not loved, believed and not observed.

Speak, then, O Lord, for Thy servant heareth; for Thou hast the words of eternal life. Speak to me, that it may be some comfort to my soul, and the amendment of my whole life; and also to Thy praise, and glory, and everlasting honor.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

GOD speaks to the understanding by the light of His Spirit, and to the heart by His holy inspirations. All that the Prophets deliver in the Word of God, all the truths which preachers announce to us, cannot enlighten the understanding, nor touch the heart, if God Himself speak not to us by the motions of His grace. We should, therefore, entreat the Lord to speak to our interior, while we exteriorly attend to or read Divine truths, for fear that hearing the word of God and not keeping it, knowing His doctrines and not following them, conscious of His will and not doing it, we should become more and more culpable in His sight.

PRAYER

SPEAK to me, O Lord, speak in such a manner to my soul that I may hear and obey Thee. Make known to me Thy designs for my salvation, and enable me to execute them. Teach me and all Christians, O Jesus, what Thou art to us, and what we ought to be to Thee. Instruct us in the sacred maxims of Thy Gospel, and induce us to practice them. For what will it avail us to believe Thy heavenly doctrines, if we endeavor not to follow them, and to live, as well as to believe, as becometh Christians? O eternal Word of the Father, by which He spoke, and all things were made, speak to my soul; say to it: "I am thy salvation." Work in me to will and to do, and consummate my salvation. Amen.

CHAPTER 3

THE WORDS OF GOD ARE TO BE HEARD WITH HUMILITY, AND THAT MANY WEIGH THEM NOT

MY son, hear My words, words most sweet, excelling all the learning of philosophers, and of the wise men of this world.

My words are spirit and life, and not to be estimated according to human perception.

They are not to be drawn forth for vain complacency, but are to be heard in silence, and to be received with all humility and great affection.

2. And I said: “Blessed is the man whom Thou, O Lord, shalt instruct, and shalt teach him Thy law; that Thou mayst give him rest from the evil days, and that he may not be desolate upon earth.”

I, saith the Lord, have taught the Prophets from the beginning, and even till now I cease not to speak to all.

But many are deaf and hardened to My voice.

The greater number listen more willingly to the world than to God; and are readier to follow the desires of their flesh than the good pleasure of God.

The world promiseth things temporal and of small value, and is served with great eagerness; I promise things most excellent and everlasting, and yet men’s hearts remain torpid.

3. Who is there that serveth and obeyeth Me in all things with that great care with which the world and its lords are served? Be ashamed, O Sidon, saith the sea. And if thou ask the cause, hear wherefore.

For a scanty sustenance, men run a great way; for eternal life, many will scarce lift foot once from the ground.

A petty gain is sought after; for a single coin sometimes men shamefully quarrel; for men will brave toil day and night, yea, for some mere trifle or a slight promise.

4. But, alas! for an unchangeable good, for an inestimable reward, for the highest honor and never-ending glory, they are loath to undergo a little fatigue.

Blush, then, thou slothful, querulous servant, that they are actually more ready to labor for death than thou for life.

They rejoice more in vanity than thou in the truth.

Sometimes, indeed, they are disappointed of their hopes; but My promise deceiveth no man, nor sendeth away empty him that trusteth in Me.

What I have promised I will give; what I have said, I will make good; if only a man continue to the end faithful in My love.

I am the Rewarder of all the good, and the mighty Prover of all the devout.

5. Write My words in thy heart, and think diligently on them; for they will be very necessary in the time of temptation.

What thou understandest not when thou readest, thou shalt know in the day of visitation.

I am accustomed to visit Mine elect in two manner of ways—namely, by trial and by consolation.

And I daily read to them two lessons: One to rebuke their vices, and the other to exhort them to the increase of virtue.

He that hath My words, and sligheteth them, hath One Who shall judge him at the last day.

A Prayer to implore the grace of devotion.

6. O Lord, my God, Thou art all my good; and who am I, that I should dare to speak to Thee?

I am Thy most poor servant, and a wretched little worm, much more poor and contemptible than I can conceive or dare express.

Yet remember, O Lord, that I am nothing; I have nothing, and can do nothing.

Thou alone art good, just and holy; Thou canst do all things; Thou givest all things; Thou fillest all things, leaving only the sinner empty.

Remember Thy tender mercies, and fill my heart with Thy grace, Thou Who wilt not that Thy works should be void.

7. How can I support myself in this wretched life, unless Thy mercy and grace strengthen me?

Turn not away Thy face from me, delay not Thy visitation, withdraw not Thy comfort, lest my soul become as earth without water to Thee.

O Lord, teach me to do Thy will; teach me to converse worthily and humbly in Thy sight; for Thou art my wisdom; Thou knowest me in the truth, and didst know me before the world was made, and before I was born in the world.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

IT is astonishing to witness how much men undertake, urged on by vain and deceitful hope, to obtain temporal and perishable goods, and how very little they do to obtain spiritual and eternal rewards, though encouraged by a solid and certain hope founded upon the word of God, which never fails. The prospect of interest, or the uncertain hope of riches, animates every heart, enhances every pleasure, dries up every tear, lightens every labor; and we think ourselves well repaid for our trouble when we have acquired the honor, the pleasure, or the advantage we had in view. The hope of Heaven alone, the prospect of eternal happiness, which may be obtained by patience and good works, animates us not; it neither supports nor consoles us; we are as much cast down and discouraged at the thought of gaining Heaven by patient suffering as though we esteemed it of no value. Whence comes this? It is because we are too much attached to things present, and too indifferent about the things to come. Our hope is faint because our faith is weak.

PRAYER

WHAT confusion for me, O Lord, that I should give myself so much trouble to please the world and to gratify my passions, and take so little pains to satisfy Thy justice by works of penance, or Thy goodness by punctuality in the discharge of my duties! Alas! Why do I not undergo as much for Thee as for myself? Why is not my ardor to please Thee as fervent as my eagerness to gratify myself? Change, O Lord, change the object and inclinations of my heart. Take Thou the place of self within me, and grant

that my love for Thee may be as ardent to please Thee as my own self-love is to satisfy myself. Give me such a love for Thee as may be called a love of reparation—that is, such as may, by its ardor and constancy, make amends for the languor and inconstancy of mine. Amen.

CHAPTER 4

THAT WE OUGHT TO WALK BEFORE GOD IN TRUTH AND HUMILITY

SON, walk before Me in truth; and always seek Me in the simplicity of thy heart. He that walketh before Me in truth shall be secured from evil incursions, and the Truth shall deliver him from seducers, and from the detractions of the wicked.

If the truth shall have made thee free, thou shalt be indeed free, and shalt make no account of the vain words of men. Lord, it is true as Thou sayest: so; I beseech Thee, let it be done unto me. Let Thy Truth teach me, let it guard me, and preserve me unto a saving end.

Let it deliver me from all evil affection and inordinate love, and I shall walk with Thee in great freedom of heart.

2. I will teach thee, saith the Truth, those things that are right and pleasing in My sight.

Think on thy sins with great displeasure and sorrow; and never esteem thyself to be anything on account of thy good works. Of a truth thou art a sinner, subject to, and entangled with many passions.

Of thyself thou always tendest to nothing, speedily dost thou fail, speedily art thou overcome, speedily disturbed, speedily dissolved.

Thou hast not anything in which thou canst glory, but many things for which thou oughtest to abase thyself; for thou art much weaker than thou canst comprehend.

3. Let nothing, then, seem much to thee of all that thou doest.

Let nothing appear great, nothing valuable or admirable, nothing worthy of esteem, nothing high, nothing truly praiseworthy or desirable, but that which is eternal.

Let the eternal Truth please thee above all things, and thine own exceeding great vileness ever displease thee.

Fear nothing so much, blame and flee nothing so much, as thy vices and sins, which ought to displease thee more than the loss of anything whatsoever.

Some persons walk not sincerely before Me; but, led by a certain curiosity and arrogance, desire to know My secrets, and to understand the high things of God, neglecting themselves and their own salvation.

These often, when I resist them, fall into great temptations and sins through their pride and curiosity.

4. Fear the judgments of God, dread the anger of the Almighty; yet presume not to examine the works of the Most High, but search diligently thine own iniquities, in how great things thou hast offended, and how much good thou hast neglected.

Some only carry their devotion in their books, some in pictures, and some in outward signs and figures.

Some have Me in their mouths, while there is little of Me in their hearts.

Others there are who, enlightened in their understanding, and purified in their affection, always pant after the things eternal; are unwilling to hear of earthly things, and grieve to be subject to the necessities of nature; and such as these perceive what the Spirit of Truth speaketh in them; for it teacheth them to despise the things of the earth, and to love the heavenly things; to disregard the world, and day and night to aspire after Heaven.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

NOTHING can more effectually teach thee what thou art, than the consideration of thy many miseries. As thou becomest convinced of thine evil inclinations, so wilt thou not elevate thyself by thoughts of vanity or self-complacency. Happy then the soul that knows itself, that knows and bewails its own miseries, weakness, and evil inclinations. It is this which subjects it to God, and obliges it to have frequent recourse to Him, and to humble itself under His all-powerful hand. The continual danger it apprehends of yielding to temptation keeps it in a state of perpetual dependence upon Him, and of sincere and constant deprivation for His sake. Be determined, then, willingly to receive from the hand of God whatever

trials He is pleased to send thee, to enter into His designs, and to submit to His good pleasure.

PRAYER

As I am sensible, O God, that nothing is more pleasing to Thee than the disposition of a soul which depends upon Thee in all things, and which applies itself to know and to do Thy will, so the grace which I now ask of Thee is that I may be docile to Thine inspirations, and faithful in following them. I well know that Thou requirest of me a sincere and constant adherence to Thy service, an exact fidelity to my duties, and an absolute conformity to Thy blessed will. I know that Thou requirest me to direct all my actions by an interior spirit, and a real desire of pleasing Thee. This, above all things, I ask of Thee, my God, to be employed only on Thee and for Thee, to esteem nothing but what is eternal, and to reckon as nothing all that passes away with time. When, O God, shall an interior life, a life of death to all things, a life hidden with Jesus Christ in Thee, become my portion, as it is now my desire? Unite my soul intimately to Thyself, captivate and confirm my heart in Thy love, both for time and eternity. Amen.

CHAPTER 5

OF THE WONDERFUL EFFECT OF DIVINE LOVE

I BLESS Thee, O heavenly Father, Father of my Lord Jesus Christ, because Thou hast vouchsafed to be mindful of me, poor as I am.

O Father of mercies, and God of all consolation, I give thanks to Thee, that sometimes Thou art pleased to cherish with Thy consolation me, who am unworthy of any consolation.

I bless and glorify Thee ever more, together with Thine only-begotten Son and the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, forever and ever.

O Lord, God, my holy Lover, when Thou shalt come into my heart, all that is within me shall be filled with joy.

Thou art my glory and the exultation of my heart.

Thou art my hope and my refuge in the day of my tribulation.

2. But because I am yet as weak in love and imperfect in virtue, therefore do I stand in need of being strengthened and comforted by Thee.

Wherefore do Thou visit me often, and instruct me in Thy holy discipline.

Free me from evil passions, and cure my heart of all disorderly affections; so that inwardly healed and well purified, I may become apt to love, courageous to suffer, and steadfast to persevere.

3. A great thing is love—a great good every way; which alone lighteneth all that is burdensome, and beareth equally all that is unequal.

For it carrieth a burden without being burdened, and maketh all else that is bitter sweet and savory.

The noble love of Jesus impelleth us to do great things, and exciteth us always to desire that which is the more perfect.

Love will tend upwards, and not be detained by things beneath.

Love will be at liberty, and free from all worldly affection, that its interior vision be not hindered; that it suffer itself not to be entangled with any temporal interest, or cast down by misfortune.

Nothing is sweeter than love, nothing stronger, nothing higher, nothing wider, nothing more pleasant, nothing fuller or better in Heaven or in earth; for love is born of God, and cannot rest but in God, above all created things.

4. The lover flieth, runneth, and rejoiceth; he is free, and cannot be restrained.

He giveth all for all, and hath all in all; because he resteth in one sovereign Good above all, from Whom all good floweth and proceedeth.

He looketh not at the gifts, but turneth himself, above all goods, to the Giver.

Love often knoweth no measure, but groweth fervent above all measure.

Love feeleth no burden, thinketh nothing of labors, would willingly do more than it can, complaineth not of impossibility, because it conceiveth that it may and can do all things.

It can achieve anything; and it doth perform and effect many things, where he that loveth not fainteth and falleth prostrate.

5. Love watcheth, and sleeping slumbereth not.

When weary it is not tired; when straitened is not constrained; when frightened is not disturbed; but, like a vivid flame and a burning torch, it mounteth upwards, and securely passeth through all.

Whosoever loveth knoweth the cry of this voice.

A loud cry in the ears of God is that ardent affection of the soul which saith: O my God, my Love, Thou art all mine, and I am all Thine.

6. Enlarge Thou me in love, that I may learn to taste with the interior mouth of the heart how sweet it is to love, and to be dissolved and to bathe in love.

Let me be possessed by love, mounting up above myself through excess of fervor and ecstasy.

Let me sing the canticle of love, let me follow Thee, my Beloved, on high, let my soul quite lose herself in Thy praises, jubilant in Thy love.

Let me love Thee more than myself, and myself only for Thee, and all others in Thee, who truly love Thee, as the law of love commandeth, which shineth forth from Thee.

7. Love is swift, sincere, pious, pleasant, and delightful; strong, patient, faithful, prudent, long-suffering, courageous, and never seeking itself.

For where a man seeketh himself, there he falleth from love.

Love is circumspect, humble, upright; not soft, not light, nor intent upon vain things; is sober, chaste, steadfast, quiet, and keepeth a guard over all the senses.

Love is submissive and obedient to superiors; in its own eyes mean and contemptible, devout and thankful to God, always trusting and hoping in Him, even when it tasteth not the relish of God's sweetness; for there is no living in love without some sorrow.

8. Whosoever is not ready to suffer all things, and to stand resigned to the will of his Beloved, is not worthy to be called a lover.

He that loveth must willingly embrace all that is hard and bitter for the sake of his Beloved, and never suffer himself to be turned away from Him by any contrary occurrences whatsoever.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

WHO shall ever conceive or explain the wonderful effects of the love of God in a soul that is faithful to its impressions, and firm in the time of trial? It is much better to feel them than to speak of them; and it is more perfect to practice them than to feel them. What does not the love of God effect when it is active, solid, and constant, in a soul that is captivated with the beauty and goodness of its God, and inflamed with the ardor of His holy charity! It often thinks of Him, for we cannot forget what we love; it does all to please Him; it suffers all for His sake; it carefully avoids the slightest faults; for how can we love God and be willing to offend Him? It desires for God all the good which He is and possesses; it would that all the hearts of men were but one, and this the heart of a seraph; it rejoices in all the glory that is given to Him in Heaven and on earth; it invites all creatures to love and praise Him; it would procure for Him, at the expense of its very life and being, if it were possible, any addition of happiness and delight; it cannot be consoled for His absence; it sighs incessantly for the happiness of seeing Him; it considers this life an exile, which the will of God alone makes supportable; it looks upon death with joy, as being the only means of coming to the possession of Him, and of no more offending Him; it burns

with a secret fire, which with lively ardor consumes it before God, in God, and for God; it lives no longer for itself, but for Him Whom it loves more than itself; it seeks, it finds, it beholds everywhere its God. Its joy and its felicity in this world is to suffer, to renounce, and to annihilate itself; and to die to all sensible objects in order to gain the love of Jesus. It believes, it hopes, it loves with a sovereign love, through the respect, esteem, and attachment which it has for the Author of its faith, hope, and charity. God exists, it says, and that is enough for my happiness, my consolation, and my joy. God deserves to be served; He wills that I should do or suffer this for Him; Jesus Christ was most willing to do and to suffer all for me. It is not satisfied with submitting itself in everything to the orders of its God; it seeks but to know His inclinations, and His good pleasure is its law. In a word, a soul that loves its God no longer lives by its own life, but it is God Who lives within it.

PRAYER

Is it possible, O Lord, that Thou Who art infinitely amiable, and Who lovest us with an infinite love, shouldst find in us so little love for Thee? Revive in our hearts that fire of Divine charity which Thou, my Savior, didst bring from Heaven upon the earth, and which Thou desirest should grow within us, Grant that, becoming insensible and indifferent to all creatures, we may feel neither ardor nor attachment but for Thee alone; and that, being ever disposed to suffer all, and to lose all, rather than Thy love but for one moment, we may love Thee in preference to all things else and esteem our whole self of infinitely less consideration than Thee. Preserve us in that habitual love of Thee which is sanctifying grace; inspire us with an active love to animate us in all our actions. Give us that perpetual love which, causing us to do all for and by Thee, may procure for us the happiness of dying in the exercise of Thy love, to continue it throughout a blessed eternity. Amen.

CHAPTER 6

OF THE PROOF OF A TRUE LOVER

MY son, thou art not yet a valiant and a prudent lover.

Why, O Lord? Because thou fallest off from what thou hast begun upon meeting with a little adversity, and too eagerly seekest after consolation.

A valiant lover standeth his ground in temptations, and yieldeth not to the crafty persuasions of the enemy.

As I please him when in prosperity, so I displease him not in adversity.

2. A prudent lover considereth not so much the gift of the lover as the love of the giver.

He looketh more at the good-will than the value, and setteth every gift beneath the Beloved.

A generous lover resteth not in the gift, but in Me, above every gift.

All, therefore, is not lost, if sometimes thou has not that feeling (of devotion) towards Me or My Saints which thou wouldst have.

That good and delightful affection which thou sometimes perceivest is the effect of present grace, and a certain foretaste of thy heavenly country, upon which thou oughtest not to lean too much, because it goeth and cometh.

But to fight against the evil motions of the mind which arise, and to despise the suggestions of the devil, is a sign of virtue of great merit.

3. Let not, therefore, strange fantasies of whatever kind suggested trouble thee.

Keep thy resolution firm, and thine intention upright, towards God.

Neither is it an illusion, because sometimes thou art rapt in ecstasy, and presently returnest to the accustomed frivolities of thy heart.

For these thou rather unwillingly bearest with than occasionest; and as long as they displease thee, and thou resistest them, it is merit and not loss.

4. Know that the old enemy striveth by all means to hinder thy desire after good, and to draw thee from every devout exercise—namely, from the veneration of the Saints, from the pious remembrance of My Passion, from the profitable calling to mind of thy sins, from watchfulness over thine own heart, and from a firm purpose of advancing in virtue.

He suggesteth many evil thoughts, that he may cause thee tediousness and horror, that he may call thee away from prayer and holy reading.

He is displeased with humble Confession; and if he could, he would cause thee to cease from Communion.

Give no credit to him, care not for him, although he often set for thee a snare of deception.

Charge him with it when he suggests wicked and unclean things, and say to him:

Begone, unclean spirit; be ashamed, miserable wretch; most unclean art thou to suggest such things in my ears.

Depart from me, thou most wicked seducer; thou shalt have no part in me; but Jesus will be with me as a valiant warrior, and thou shalt stand confounded.

I prefer to die and undergo any torment whatsoever, rather than consent to thee.

Hold thy peace and be silent; I will hear thee no further, although thou many times molest me.

The Lord is my light and my salvation: whom shall I fear?

If whole armies should stand together against me, my heart shall not fear. The Lord is my Helper and my Redeemer.

5. Fight like a good soldier; and if sometimes thou fall through frailty, resume greater courage than before, confiding in My more abundant grace. But take very great care against vain complacency and pride.

Through this many are led into error, and sometimes fall into almost incurable blindness.

Let this fall of the proud, foolishly presuming on themselves, serve thee as a warning and keep thee always humble.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

I KNOW that the true love of God may consist more in suffering, for His sake,

dryness, disgust, and the most grievous temptations, without yielding to them, than in the enjoyment of interior delights, sweetnesses, and consolations; for in the one instance we receive much from God, in the other we give much to Him. In the one we love the gifts of God, in the other we love Himself and His holy will preferably to all His gifts; and the love by which we love God for what He is, is much more perfect than that by which we love Him for what He bestows upon us. Ah! how pleasing to Almighty God to behold a soul ever watchful over itself to keep its heart free from the least faults, ever attentive to its duties, in obedience to His orders, and in resignation to His holy will, and ever willing generously to resist the demands of nature and the temptations of the devil. A soul which neither allows nor pardons itself anything, but endeavors to correspond with the holy designs of God in its regard, to destroy in itself everything human, and to overthrow self-love, takes for the rule of its conduct that rule of true love: "All to please God, and nothing to gratify myself." But what most pleases God is to see that this soul, really clothed with the strength and grace of His Spirit, in all its contests with itself and its passions, can endure nothing contrary to His good pleasure; to see that it neither asks, nor seeks, nor finds any consolation or sensible support, its delight being the delight which God takes in seeing it suffer, even without being sensibly assured that He takes pleasure in it. Its submission and its self-renunciation are its consolation and support, happy in becoming a victim of immolation to the love of God.

PRAYER

ABANDON me not, O Lord, to the sensitiveness of self-love, which will suffer nothing; nor to the inefficacy of my desires, by which I ever will what I never perform. Penetrate my heart with a conviction of the happiness and obligation of suffering all for Thee, and as Thou didst suffer. Grant that, having no other interest but Thine, and willing only what Thou willest, I may receive pains of mind as cheerfully as consolations of spirit; and hoping that, punishing me here, Thou wilt spare me hereafter, I may often say to Thee, in the time of suffering: May Thy justice be satisfied whatever

I may have to endure in this life. The less I enjoy Thee, the more will I love Thee; the more will I resist the irregular desires of my heart, that I may ultimately deserve the more to possess Thee. O my God! my Savior! I am willing to be deprived of all consolation here below, provided I never offend Thee. What a happiness to become a victim of Calvary, a martyr to Thy crucified Heart, and entirely devoted to Thy good pleasure! Amen.

CHAPTER 7

OF CONCEALING GRACE UNDER THE GUARDIANSHIP OF HUMILITY

MY son, it is both more advantageous and more secure for thee, to keep secret the grace of devotion, and not, therefore, to extol thyself, not to talk much about it, nor to ponder it overmuch; but rather to despise thyself the more, and to tremble as if it were given to one unworthy.

Thou must not tenaciously cleave to such affection as may quickly be changed contrariwise.

Think with thyself, when thou hast grace, how miserable and poor thou art wont to be when deprived of it.

Nor doth progress in spiritual life consist so much in having the grace of consolation, but in bearing the withdrawal of it with humility, self-abnegation, and patience; so as not then to grow remiss in the exercise of prayer, nor to suffer thyself to relax from any of thy accustomed good works, but to the best of, thy ability and understanding do willingly what lieth in thee, and do not, through any dryness or anxiety of mind which thou feelest, wholly neglect thyself.

2. For many there are who, when things succeed not well with them, presently grow impatient or slothful.

Now the way of man is not always in his own power, but it belongeth to God to give and to console when He willeth, as much as He willeth, and whom He willeth, just as it shall please Him, and no more.

Some, wanting caution, have ruined themselves by reason of the grace of devotion; because they were for doing more than they could, not weighing well the measure of their own littleness, but following rather the affection of the heart than the judgment of reason.

And as they presumptuously undertook greater things than were pleasing to God, therefore they quickly lost grace.

Needy did they become, and miserably abandoned, who had built themselves a nest in Heaven; to the end that, thus humbled and impoverished, they might learn not to fly with their own pinions, but to trust under My wings.

Such as are yet but novices, and inexperienced in the way of the Lord, unless they govern themselves by the counsel of the discreet, may easily be deceived and lost.

3. And if they will rather follow their own judgment than believe others who have more experience, their end will be perilous, should they still refuse to be withdrawn from their own conceits.

The self-wise rarely endure humbly to be ruled by others.

Better is it to have but little knowledge, with humility and a weak capacity, than great stores of learning with vain complacency.

Better is it to have little than much, whereof thou mightest be proud.

He acts not with sufficient discretion who giveth himself up wholly to joy, forgetting his former poverty, and the chaste fear of the Lord which feareth to lose grace that is proffered.

Neither is he virtuously enough wise who, in time of adversity or any tribulation whatsoever, conducteth himself too despairingly, and thinketh of and repositeth less confidingly in Me than he ought.

4. He who would be too secure in time of peace will often be found too much dejected and fearful in time of war.

If thou couldst always continue humble and little in thine own eyes, and keep thy spirit in due order and subjection, thou wouldst not fall so easily into danger and offense.

It is good counsel, that when thou hast conceived the spirit of fervor, thou shouldst meditate how it will be with thee when that light shall be withdrawn.

And when this shall happen, remember that the light may return again, which, for a caution to thee and for My glory, I have withdrawn for a time.

5. Such a trial is oftentimes more profitable than if thou wert always to have prosperity according to thy will.

For a man's merits are not to be estimated by his having many visions or consolations, or by his knowledge of Scripture, or by his being placed in a

more elevated station.

But by his being grounded in true humility and replenished with Divine charity: by his seeking always, purely and entirely, the honor of God; by his esteeming himself to be nothing, and by his sincerely despising himself, and being better pleased to be despised and humbled by others than to be honored by them.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

MAN in the state of innocence would have perfect love, because all within him would have submitted without difficulty to God's orders; but in the state of sin in which we now are, we cannot serve Him without continually fighting against ourselves; nor can we love Him without hating ourselves; we can do but little for Him but what we do against ourselves. Hence we should humbly submit to the dryness, disgust, and irksomeness which we frequently experience in our exercises of piety; we should enter into the designs of Almighty God, make a merit of seeking to please Him without gratifying ourselves: and willingly consent to become victims of His love, and to sacrifice all for His honor. Did the truly Christian soul know how far a state of suffering may be made a holy and sanctifying state, a state of proved and purified love for God; in a word, a state in which we neither seek nor find ourselves in anything but purely God, how would that soul esteem it! What care would it not take to profit by it—that is, to suffer patiently, to support the Lord with courage, and to neglect nothing, whatever uneasiness might arise. Were we thoroughly persuaded of, and deeply impressed with a conviction of the continual merit of a life of dryness when supported without dejection, we should without doubt, endeavor to correspond with the designs of God, Who would thus oblige us not to seek ourselves in anything, but to endeavor to please Him, and to make a real merit of His good pleasure. We should esteem ourselves happy in sacrificing to God the gratification of our hearts, in yielding ourselves up to Him, and in doing our duty, even without the satisfaction of knowing that we please Him!

PRAYER

PURIFY my heart, O Lord, from the pursuits of self-love, which is never satisfied with what is done for Thee unless it also be gratified by it. Grant that, in all my exercises of piety, I may seek rather to please Thee than to gratify myself; that dying daily to the natural life of my soul, in which consists true satisfaction, I may seek no other pleasure than fidelity in Thy service and exactness in following Thy holy will in all things; that so, approaching to Thee, my God, more by faith than by sense, I may do and suffer all for Thy love, notwithstanding my natural aversion and the deprivation of all the sweetness and sensible charms of piety, persuaded of the truth of what Thou didst once say to St. Gertrude: That Thou reservest until death the consolation of all we perform without consolation during life.

Grant, therefore, that my whole employment and all my happiness may be to serve and to love Thee much more for Thyself than for my own gratification. Amen.

CHAPTER 8

OF THE MEAN ESTIMATION OF ONE'S SELF IN THE EYES OF GOD

I WILL speak to my Lord, whereas I am but dust and ashes.

If I repute myself greater than this, behold, Thou standest against me; and my sins bear a true testimony, and I cannot contradict it.

But if I abase myself, and bring myself down to very nothingness, and divest myself of all self-esteem, and reduce myself, as I really am, to mere dust, Thy grace will be favorable to me, and Thy light will draw nigh to my heart; and all self-estimation, how small soever, will be sunk in the depth of my own nothingness, and there lose itself forever.

It is there Thou showest me to myself, what I am, what I have been, and to what I am come; for I am nothing, and I knew it not.

If I am left to myself, behold, I am nothing, and all weakness; but if Thou suddenly look upon me, I presently become strong, and am replenished with new joy.

And truly wonderful it is that I am so quickly raised up and so graciously embraced by Thee; I who, by my own weight, am always sinking down to the lowest depths.

2. It is Thy love that effects this, gratuitously preventing and assisting me in so many necessities, preserving me also from grievous dangers, and, as I may truly say, rescuing me from innumerable evils.

For, by a perverse loving of myself, I have lost myself; and by seeking Thee alone, and purely loving Thee, I have found both myself and Thee; and by this love more profoundly annihilated myself.

Because Thou, O most sweet Lord, dost deal with me above all desert, and above all that I dare hope or ask for.

3. Blessed be Thou, O my God; for though I am unworthy of all good, yet Thy generosity and infinite goodness never cease to do good even to those that are ungrateful, and that are turned far away from Thee.

Oh, convert us unto Thee, that we may be humble, thankful, and devout; for Thou art our salvation, our courage, and our strength.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

WHEN we perceive within ourselves any feelings of vanity or self-complacency, we need but consider for one moment, the unfathomable depth of our corruption, and descend into the abyss of our miseries, to stifle them in their very birth. For how can we represent to ourselves that universal incapacity which we experience for supernatural good; our inclination for evil; how violently we are carried towards wickedness; the blindness of our understanding; the malice of our hearts; and the fury of our passions, which are always revolting against reason; in a word, how can we consider what we really are, and not despise and humble ourselves beneath all creatures? And if we consider ourselves with reference to God; if we reflect what He is and what we are in His sight, a mere nothing, sinners, but sinners loaded with the numberless crimes we have committed, not knowing whether they have ever been pardoned; creatures so weak and feeble, so inconstant in good, and so constant in evil; alas! perhaps in the sight of God, living and dying in the state of sin, and worthy only of His eternal hatred; how, in the midst of such reflections, can we possibly consent to the least thought of vanity? How true it is that to esteem ourselves is not to know, but to forget what we are.

PRAYER

SUFFER not pride, O Lord, to deprive us of the sight and conviction of our manifold miseries. Oblige us to do justice to ourselves and to Thee, by referring the glory of all things to Thee, to Whom alone it belongs; and by giving to ourselves nothing put contempt, which is truly our desert and appropriate portion. How does a Christian who knows that he is all Thine, my Savior—and that he carries within himself an inexhaustible source of malice and corruption—give Thee alone the honor of all the good he may do by the help of Thy grace? Attributing nothing to himself but the evil

which he commits, since without Thee he is incapable of doing anything but sin! Fill my heart with this true humility, without which it is impossible ever to become worthy of Thy love. Amen.

CHAPTER 9

THAT ALL THINGS ARE TO BE REFERRED TO GOD, AS TO OUR LAST END

SON, I must be thy supreme and ultimate end, if thou desirest to be truly happy. By this intention shall thine affections be purified, which too often are irregularly bent upon thyself and things created.

For if in anything thou seekest thyself, thou presently faintest away within thyself, and growest dry.

Principally, therefore, refer all things to Me; for it is I that have given thee all.

Consider each thing as flowing from the sovereign Good; and therefore all must be returned to Me as to their origin.

2. Out of Me both little and great, poor and rich, as out of a living fountain, draw living water; and they who freely and willingly serve Me shall receive grace for grace.

But he who would glory in anything else beside Me, or delight in any good as his own, shall not be established in true joy, nor enlarged in his heart; but in many ways shall be impeded and straitened.

Therefore thou must not ascribe any good to thyself, nor attribute virtue to any man; but give all to God, without Whom man has nothing.

I have given all, I will also have all again; and with great strictness do I require a return of thanks.

3. This is that truth by which all vainglory is put to flight.

And if heavenly grace and true charity come in, there shall be no envy nor narrowness of heart, nor shall self-love keep possession.

For Divine charity overcometh all, and enlargeth all the powers of the soul.

If thou art truly wise, thou wilt rejoice in Me alone, thou wilt hope in Me alone; for none is good but God alone, Who is to be praised above all and to be blessed in all.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

LET an upright and pure intention of pleasing God direct all thine actions, and endeavor to give Him the whole glory of all the good thou performest, for He is the plenitude and source of all good. Glory only in thine infirmities, and turn them to thine advantage by frequently offering them to the God of all mercy, Who is ever well pleased in a soul that is penetrated with a sense of its own nothingness. Dwell not upon thoughts of vanity and self-complacency, and do not desire to be praised and esteemed by men; for God confounds and despises those who seek to please men and to obtain their praises. The only means by which thou canst please God and gain His love, is to despise and hate thyself.

PRAYER

PERMIT me not, O Lord, to attribute the least good to myself, but to refer all to Thee, Who alone art the Author of every good work. Glory is Thy portion, and I will give it wholly and entirely to Thee; confusion is mine, and I will accept it from Thy hand; happy if, by joyfully resigning myself to contempt, I become worthy of Thy favors, and if, by living a humble and concealed life, I die to myself and to the world, and live only to Thee. Amen.

CHAPTER 10

THAT IT IS SWEET TO DESPISE THE WORLD AND SERVE GOD

NOW I will speak again, O Lord, and will not be silent; I will say in the hearing of my God and my King Who is on high:

Oh, how great is the abundance of Thy sweetness, O Lord, which Thou hast hidden for those that fear Thee!

But what art Thou to those that love Thee? What to those that serve Thee with their whole heart?

Unspeakable, indeed, is the sweetness of Thy contemplation, which Thou bestowest on those that love Thee.

In this most of all hast Thou showed me the sweetness of Thy love, that when I had no being, Thou didst make me: and when I was straying far from Thee, Thou broughtest me back again, that I might serve Thee; and Thou hast commanded me to love Thee.

2. O Fountain of everlasting love, what shall I say of Thee?

How can I ever forget Thee, Who hast vouchsafed to remember me even after that I was corrupted and was lost?

Beyond all hope hast Thou shown mercy to Thy servant: and beyond all desert hast Thou manifested Thy grace and friendship.

What return shall I make to Thee for this favor? for it is not granted to all to forsake all things, to renounce the world, and to assume the monastic life.

Is it much that I should serve Thee, Whom the whole creation is bound to serve?

It ought not to seem much to me to serve Thee; but this rather doth appear great and wonderful to me, that Thou vouchsafest to receive one so wretched and unworthy for Thy servant, and to unite Him to Thy Beloved.

3. Behold all things are Thine which I have, and with which I serve Thee. And yet contrariwise Thou rather servest me than I Thee.

Lo! Heaven and earth, which Thou hast created for the service of man, stand prepared, and daily perform whatsoever Thou hast commanded.

And this is but little; for Thou hast also created and appointed Angels for the service of man.

But what transcendeth all this is, that Thou Thyself hast vouchsafed to serve man, and hast promised that Thou wilt give him Thyself.

4. What shall I give Thee for all these thousand favors? Would that I could serve Thee all the days of my life!

Would that I were able, were it but for one day, to render Thee worthy homage!

Verily Thou art worthy of all service, of all honor, and of eternal praise.

Thou art truly my Lord, and I am Thy poor servant, who am bound with all my strength to serve Thee, and ought never to grow weary of praising Thee.

This is my will, this is my desire; and whatever is wanting in me do Thou vouchsafe to supply.

5. It is a great honor, a great glory, to serve Thee, and to despise all things for Thee.

For they who willingly subject themselves to Thy most holy service shall have great grace.

They shall experience the most sweet consolation of the Holy Spirit, who for the love of Thee have cast away all carnal delight.

They shall gain great freedom of mind, who for Thy Name's sake enter upon the narrow way, and relinquish all worldly care.

6. O pleasant and delightful service of God, which maketh a man truly free and holy!

O sacred state of religious servitude, which maketh men equal to Angels, pleasing God, terrible to the devils, and commendable to all the faithful!

O servitude lovely and ever to be desired, in which we are rewarded with the greatest good, and joy is acquired that will never end!

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

To judge ourselves unworthy of every grace; to correspond with those we receive; to refer to God all the glory of our fidelity in His service; often to thank Him for His goodness in seeking us when we go astray, and receiving us again after we have sinned; to hope all things from His mercy, and to place ourselves entirely in His hands, is what should be done by every Christian soul who knows what Jesus Christ is to him, and what he ought to be to Jesus Christ.

How fortunate we are in not being able to find in ourselves any real cause for feelings of vanity or self-complacency, for this obliges us to forsake ourselves, and abide only in God! Ah! how does the sense of our miseries establish us in the heart of the God of mercy! And how does the experience of our inability to do good, and our inclination for evil, oblige us to adhere to God, and to have continual recourse to Him!

PRAYER

HOW can I forget Thee, O Lord, Who hast so often preserved me from Hell into which I might have precipitated myself by my irregular or useless life? Cure me of that vain complacency and swelling pride which would persuade me that there is something of good in me. It is in Thee, O Lord, it is all from Thee; for without Thee I can do nothing but offend Thee. Suffer me not to exalt myself before Thee by voluntary pride, lest I draw upon myself the same chastisement with which Thou didst visit the first Angels. I would rather be despised by men and loved by Thee, than be esteemed by them and reprov'd by Thee. Grant that I may do Thee justice by referring all that is good to Thee, and to myself naught but the evil I have committed, that I may thus obtain Thy merciful pardon. Amen.

CHAPTER 11

THAT THE DESIRES OF OUR HEART ARE TO BE EXAMINED AND MODERATED

SON, it behooves thee still to learn many things, which thou hast not yet well learned.

2. What are these, Lord?

3. That thou conform in all things thy desire to My good pleasure: and that thou be not a lover of thyself, but earnestly zealous that My will may be done.

Desires often inflame thee, and vehemently impel thee: but consider whether it be for My honor or thine own interest that thou art most moved.

If I am the cause, thou wilt be well contented with whatever I shall ordain; but if there lurk in thee any self-seeking, behold, this it is that hindereth thee and weigheth thee down.

4. Take care, then, not to rely too much upon any preconceived desire before thou hast consulted Me; lest perhaps afterwards thou repent, or be displeased with that which at first pleased thee, and which thou wast zealous for as the best.

For not every inclination which appeareth good is therefore at once to be followed; nor is every contrary affection at once to be rejected.

Even in good intentions and desires it is expedient sometimes to use some restraint; lest by too much eagerness thou incur distractions of mind; lest for want of discipline thou generate scandal to others; or by opposition from others thou be suddenly disturbed and fall.

5. Sometimes, indeed, we must use violence and manfully resist the sensual appetite, and not regard what the flesh liketh or disliketh, but rather endeavor that, even against its will, it may be subject to the spirit.

And so long must it be chastised and kept under servitude, till it readily obey in all things, and learn to be content with a little, and to be pleased with simplicity, and not to murmur at any inconvenience.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

OUR desires should be regulated by the will of God, moderated by the influence of His grace, and referred to His glory. True mortification of the heart consists in repressing the ardor of our desires, in turning their earnestness against self, and in directing them all to their proper object, which is God. The holy practice of self-renunciation, which is absolutely necessary for salvation, and which is included in the spirit of the Gospel, and the engagements of our Baptism, consists entirely in repressing our irregular desires, in raising our indifferent or natural inclinations to a supernatural end, and in grounding our hopes of salvation, through the merits of Christ, on the fulfillment of our good resolutions.

PRAYER

WHEN, O Lord, shall I become so wearied with my irregular and fruitless desires as to be induced to regulate them by Thy holy will, and to practice the good which I desire to perform? Shall I be satisfied with continually saying I desire earnestly to be all Thine, and to serve Thee faithfully, without doing it with constancy, or desiring it effectually? Alas I my God, I know that Hell is filled with good desires and resolutions, yet it is Hell. Can I be converted and gain salvation by only desiring it, as so many condemned Christians have desired, and do still desire it? Root out, O Lord, this inefficacy of my desires, which may lead me to perdition; and grant that I may ever unite to the desire the use of those means Thou affordest me of pleasing Thee and of saving my soul. Amen.

CHAPTER 12

OF ACQUIRING PATIENCE, AND OF STRIVING AGAINST CONCUPISCENCE

O LORD God, patience, as I perceive, is very necessary for me, for many adverse things happen to us in this life.

For in whatsoever way I may arrange for my peace, my life cannot be without war and sorrow.

2. My son, so it is; for I would not have thee seek for such a peace as to have no temptations, or to feel no adversity; but then, indeed, think thou hast found peace, when thou shalt be exercised in divers tribulations, and tried in much adversity.

If thou shalt say thou art not able to suffer much, how then wilt thou endure the fire of Purgatory?

Of two evils, one ought always to choose the less.

That thou mayst, therefore, escape the future eternal punishment, endeavor patiently to endure present evils for God's sake.

Thinkest thou that men of the world suffer nothing or but little? Thou shalt not find it so, though thou seek out the most voluptuous.

3. But sayest thou, they follow after many delights, and withal their own will, and therefore make small account of their tribulations?

4. Be it so, that they have all they desire; but how long thinkest thou this will last?

Behold, as smoke shall they vanish that abound in this world, and there shall be no remembrance of their past joys.

Nay, even whilst they live, they rest not in the possession of them without bitterness, weariness, and fear.

From the very same thing whence they conceive delight, thence frequently do they derive the penalty of anguish.

It is just with them it should be so, that since they seek and follow inordinately their pleasures, they should not enjoy them without confusion and bitterness.

Oh, how short, how deceitful, how inordinate and shameful are all these pleasures!

Yet, through sottishness and blindness, men understand this not, but, like dumb animals, for the poor pleasures of this mortal life they incur the death of the soul.

But thou, my son, go not after thy concupiscence, but turn away from thine own will.

Delight in the Lord, and He will give thee the desires of thy heart.

5. For if thou wouldst in truth taste of delight and be abundantly comforted by Me, behold, in the contempt of all things worldly, and in the cutting off of every sordid gratification, shall thy blessing be, and consolation most abundant be rendered to thee.

And the more thou withdrawest thyself from all solace of creatures, the sweeter and the more powerful consolations wilt thou find in Me.

But thou shalt not attain to these at first without some sorrow and labor of conflict.

Long-standing custom will make resistance, but by a better habit shall it be subdued.

The flesh will complain, but by fervor of spirit shall it be reined in.

The old serpent will instigate thee, and trouble thee anew; but by prayer he shall be put to flight; moreover, by useful employment his greater access to thee shall be prevented.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

TRUE peace of soul consists in an humble and constant submission to the will of God under the severest pains and the most violent temptations. When thou findest within thyself nothing but repugnance, trouble, and despondency, it is then that by renouncing thyself, and giving thyself entirely into the hands of God, thou wilt obtain true peace of soul. To separate thyself from everything pleasing, to accept everything that is

disagreeable as coming from the hand of God, to conquer on all occasions thy repugnance, is the surest way to arrive at true peace.

PRAYER

THOU alone, O Jesus, canst impart to us this Interior peace, this peace of God, this ineffable peace, and this humble submission. We ask it of Thee, and we hope it from Thee. Give us this precious gift, we beseech Thee, which may keep our minds and our hearts in Thy faith and love. Amen.

CHAPTER 13

OF THE OBEDIENCE OF A HUMBLE SUBJECT, AND THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS CHRIST

SON, he who striveth to withdraw himself from obedience withdraweth himself from grace; and he that seeketh particular privileges loseth such as are in common.

He who doth not freely and willingly submit himself to his superior, it is a sign that his flesh is not as yet perfectly obedient to him, but oftentimes rebelleth and murmereth.

Learn, then, to submit thyself readily to thy superior, if thou desire to subdue thine own flesh. For sooner is the exterior enemy overcome, if the inward man be not laid waste.

There is not a more troublesome or worse enemy to the soul than thou thyself art when not well agreeing with the spirit.

Thou must in good earnest conceive a true contempt of thyself, if thou wilt prevail against flesh and blood.

Because as yet thou lovest thyself too inordinately, therefore dost thou fear to resign thyself entirely to the will of others.

2. But what great matter is it, if thou who art but dust and a mere nothing, submit thyself to man for God's sake, when I, the Almighty and the Most High, Who created all things out of nothing, have for thy sake humbly subjected Myself to man?

I became the most humble and most abject of all men, that thou mightest overcome thy pride by My humility.

Learn, O dust, to obey; learn to humble thyself, earth and clay, and to bow under the feet of all.

Learn to break thine own will, and to yield thyself up to all subjection.

3. Kindle wrath against thyself; suffer not the swelling of pride to live in thee; but show thyself so submissive and little that all may trample on thee, and tread thee under their feet as the dirt of the streets.

What hast thou, vain man, to complain of?

What answer, wretched sinner, canst thou make to those that reproach thee—thou who hast so often offended God, and so very many times deserved Hell?

But Mine eye hath spared thee, because thy soul was precious in My sight; that thou mightest know My love, and mightest always live thankful for My favors; and that thou mightest continually give thyself to true subjection and humility, and bear patiently thine own contempt.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

WE must not be satisfied with exteriorly submitting to obedience and in things that are easy, but we must obey with our whole heart, and in things the most difficult. For the greater the difficulty, the greater also is the merit of obedience. Can we refuse to submit to man for God's sake, when God, for love of us, submits to man, even to His very executioners?

Jesus Christ was willingly obedient during His whole life, and even unto the death of the Cross; and am I unwilling to spend my life in the exercise of obedience, and to make it my cross and my merit? Independence belongs to God, who has made man dependent upon others, that his subordination may be to him the means of his sanctification. I will therefore form myself upon the model of my submissive, dependent, and obedient Savior, and dispose of nothing in myself, not even of my own will.

PRAYER

O MY Savior, Who, in obedience to Thy Father, wast conceived in the womb of Mary, Who didst go down to Nazareth, and wast subject to Thy parents for thirty years, Who wouldst be born, and live, and die in obedience, induce us to follow Thine example, to obey Thee in all things in the persons of our superiors, who hold Thy place in our regard. Grant that,

doing willingly what is ordained us, and endeavoring to believe it best, we may spend our whole I lives in continual obedience, and thus secure for ourselves Thy grace in time, and Thy glory for all eternity. Amen.

CHAPTER 14

OF CONSIDERING THE SECRET JUDGMENTS OF GOD, THAT WE NOT BE PUFFED UP WITH OUR OWN GOOD WORKS

THOU thunderest forth over my head Thy judgments, O Lord, and Thou shakest all my bones with fear and trembling, and my soul is terrified exceedingly.

I stand astonished, and consider that the heavens are not pure in Thy sight.

If in the Angels Thou hast found depravity, and hast not spared them, what will become of me?

Stars have fallen from Heaven; and I, dust as I am, how can I presume?

They whose works seemed praiseworthy have fallen to the very lowest; and those that did eat the Bread of Angels I have seen delighted with the husks of swine.

2. There is no sanctity, if Thou, O Lord, withdraw Thy hand.

No wisdom avails, if Thou cease to govern us.

No strength is of any help, if Thou cease to preserve us.

No chastity is secure without Thy protection.

No self-custody profits us, if Thy holy vigilance be not nigh unto us.

For left to ourselves, we sink and perish; but by Thee visited, we are raised up and live.

For we are unsteadfast, but by Thee we are strengthened; we are tepid, but by Thee we are inflamed.

3. Oh, how humbly and lowly ought I to think of myself; of how little worth, whatever good I may seem to have!

Oh, how profoundly ought I to abase myself under Thine unfathomable judgments, O Lord, where I find myself to be nothing else but nothing, and altogether nothing.

O weight immense! O sea that cannot be passed over, where I find nothing of myself but only and wholly nothing!

Where, then, is there any lurking-place for glorying? Where any confidence conceived of my own virtue?

All vainglory is swallowed up in the profundity of Thy judgments over me.

4. What is all flesh in Thy sight? Shall the clay glory against Him that formed it?

How can he be puffed up with vain talk whose heart is subjected to God in truth?

All the world will not lift him up whom the truth hath subjected to itself.

Neither will he be moved with the tongues of all that praise him, who hath settled his whole hope in God.

For even they who speak, behold, they are all nothing, for they shall pass away with the sound of their words; but the truth of the Lord remaineth forever.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

THE contemplation of the holiness and purity of God, in Whose sight the heavens are not clean, and the conviction of our own sinfulness and corruption, should stifle in us every rising sentiment of pride. An Angel sins, and God cannot endure him; He rejects him, and casts him off forever. Man sins, and He bears with him; He offers him His mercy, and opens to him the gates of Heaven. In the fallen Angels we behold the horrid nature of sin, and the awful character of God's justice; in the redeeming love of Jesus we are invited to confide entirely in His tender mercy: from both we derive motives of a speedy conversion from sin, to awaken our gratitude, and to animate us to a life of holiness.

PRAYER

O GOD of sanctity, Who canst not endure iniquity, how canst Thou endure me, an unworthy sinner, who am committing iniquity without ceasing, and am continually displeasing Thee? O God of purity, before Whom the heavens are not clean, and Who didst discover corruption even in the Angels, why dost Thou not reject me, who am naught but defilement and sin? “Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean.” I cast myself upon Thy mercy, and conjure Thee to enable me to correct and to punish all my sins and to destroy within me everything that is contrary to Thine infinite sanctity. Amen.

CHAPTER 15

HOW WE ARE TO BE DISPOSED, AND WHAT WE ARE TO SAY, WHEN WE DESIRE ANYTHING

My son, say this on every occasion:

Lord, if it be pleasing to Thee, so let it be.

Lord, if it be to Thy honor, let this be done in Thy Name.

Lord, if Thou seest that this is expedient, and approvest it as profitable for me, then grant that I may use it to Thy honor.

But if Thou knowest that it will be hurtful to me, and not profitable for the salvation of my soul, take away from me such a desire.

For not every desire is from the Holy Ghost, though to man it seem right and good.

It is difficult to judge truly whether it be a good or evil spirit that impelleth thee to desire this or that, or whether thou art not moved to it by thine own spirit.

Many in the end have been deceived, who at first seemed to be led by a good spirit.

2. Whatsoever, therefore, occurreth to thy mind as worthy to be desired, it must be always with the fear of God and humility of heart that thou desire and ask for it.

And above all thou oughtest, with self-resignation, to commit all to Me, and to say:

Lord, Thou knowest what is best; let this or that be done as Thou wilt.

Give what Thou wilt, and as much as Thou wilt, and at what time Thou wilt.

Do with me as Thou knowest, and as best pleaseth Thee, and is most for Thy honor.

Put me where Thou wilt, and do with me in all things according to Thy will.

I am in Thy hand; turn me hither and thither as Thou choosest.

Lo, I am Thy servant, ready for all things; for I do not desire to live for myself, but for Thee; oh, that I could do so in a worthy and perfect manner!

A Prayer for fulfilling the will of God.

3. Grant me Thy grace, most merciful Jesus, that it may be with me, and labor with me, and continue with me unto the end.

Grant me always to will and desire that which is most acceptable to Thee, and which pleaseth Thee best.

Let Thy will be mine, and let my will always follow Thine, and agree perfectly with it.

Let me always will or not will the same with Thee; and let me not be able to will or not to will otherwise than as Thou willest or willest not.

4. Grant that I may die to all things that are in the world, and for Thy sake love to be despised, and to be unknown in this world.

Grant unto me, above all things to be desired, that I may rest in Thee, and that my heart may be at peace in Thee.

Thou art the true peace of the heart; Thou art its only rest; out of Thee all things are hard and restless.

In this peace, in the self-same, that is, in Thee, the one sovereign eternal Good, I will sleep and take my rest. Amen.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

As it is God Who wills all that happens to us, and wills it for our good, for our salvation, so we ought in all things to resign ourselves to His holy appointments—that is, we should, first, will only what God wills, and when He wills it; secondly, we should never separate our will from His by any voluntary transgression, and never say or do anything contrary to it; thirdly, we should never knowingly sin, or resist God in what He requires from us.

A firm and constant resolution to do, to renounce, and to suffer whatever He at present requires, or may in future demand of our fidelity, is all that is necessary to make us victims of His love and good pleasure, and to

commence here upon earth what we hope to continue in Heaven. Wherefore let us often pray that the will of God may be accomplished in us in time, as it will be in eternity.

PRAYER

O MY God, Whose holy will is the rule and principle of all good, mayst Thou be the soul of all my actions, and the object of all the motions of my heart. Grant that in my whole conduct, and in all trials, I may seek only to do and to suffer whatever Thou wilt, because it is Thy will, and as Thou pleasest; that I may renounce my own will in everything; that I may make Thee the sole master and proprietor of my heart, that in all things it may be submissive to Thy will, and never depart from it. Amen.

CHAPTER 16

THAT TRUE CONSOLATION IS TO BE SOUGHT IN GOD ALONE

WHATSOEVER I can desire or imagine for my comfort I look not for here, but hereafter. For if I alone should have all the comfort of this world, and might enjoy all its delights, certain it is they could not last long.

Wherefore thou canst not O my soul, be fully comforted nor perfectly refreshed, except in God, the comforter of the poor and the receiver of the humble.

Wait a little while, my soul, wait for the Divine promise, and thou wilt have abundance of all good things in Heaven.

If thou desirest too inordinately these present things, thou wilt lose those that are heavenly and eternal.

Use temporal things, but desire eternal.

Thou canst not be satisfied with any temporal goods, because thou wast not created for their enjoyment.

2. Although thou shouldst have all created goods, thou couldst not be happy and blessed; but in God, Who created all things, consists all thy beatitude and happiness.

Not such as is seen or praised by the foolish lovers of the world, but such as the good faithful of Christ await, and of which they that are spiritual and clean of heart, whose conversation is in Heaven, have sometimes a foretaste.

All human comfort is vain and short.

Blessed and true is that comfort which is derived inwardly from Truth.

A devout man everywhere carrieth about with him Jesus his Consoler; and saith to Him: Be with me, O Lord Jesus, in all places and at all times.

Let this be my consolation, to be freely willing to forego all human comfort.

And if Thy comfort be withdrawn, let Thy will and just trial be to me as the greatest of comforts.

For Thou wilt not always be angry, nor wilt Thou threaten forever.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

GOD is the center of our hearts, says St. Augustine, and we cannot rest, till we rest in God—that is, so long as we are attached to ourselves and to creatures, we seek happiness where it is not to be found, out of God. We should, therefore, withdraw our hearts from all that is not God, and die to all things else, if we would enjoy true happiness, which can only result from an entire dedication of our souls to God. Wherefore let us not say, with those of the world: Happy they who possess abundance of all things they desire, and want none of the goods and pleasures of the earth! Rather let us say: “Blessed is the heart for which God sufficeth! happy the Christian who loves that only now which he shall love forever!”

PRAYER

WHEN, O God, shall I become so detached from created objects, as to sigh only for the happiness of pleasing and loving Thee? When wilt Thou become more to me than all things else, all in all, even as Thou art to the blessed in Heaven? Grant that I may deny myself every gratification, and delight only in pleasing Thee. Pains, crosses, and afflictions shall be from henceforth the joy of my soul, or at least the subjects of my patience, because they have been consecrated by Thee, my Jesus! and it is Thy blessed will I should endure them. And if, as I deserve, Thou deprivest me of consolation, grant that humble submission may support me, whilst Thou hidest the light of Thy countenance. Amen.

CHAPTER 17

THAT ALL SOLICITUDE MUST BE PLACED IN GOD

SON, suffer Me to do with thee what I will; I know what is expedient for thee. Thou thinkest as man; thou judgest in many things as human affection suggesteth.

Lord, what Thou sayest is true. Greater is Thy care for me than all the care I can take of myself.

For at too great a hazard doth he stand who casteth not his whole care on Thee.

Lord, provided that my will remain true and firm towards Thee, do with me whatsoever it shall please Thee.

For it cannot but be good, whatever Thou shalt do with me.

2. If thou wilt have me to be in darkness; be Thou blessed; and if Thou wilt have me to be in light, be Thou again blessed; if Thou vouchsafe to comfort me, be Thou blessed; and if it be Thy will I should be afflicted, be Thou still equally blessed.

3. Son, thus must thou stand affected, if thou desire to walk with Me.

Thou must be as ready to suffer as to rejoice; thou must be as glad to be poor and needy, as to be full and rich.

4. Lord, I will suffer willingly for Thee whatsoever Thou art pleased should befall me.

I am willing, indifferently to receive from Thy hand good and evil, sweet and bitter, joy and sorrow, and to give Thee thanks for all that happeneth to me.

Keep me from all sin, and I will fear neither death nor Hell.

So that Thou cast me not off forever, nor blot me out of the book of life, what tribulation soever befalleth me shall not hurt me.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

To preserve peace in time of trouble, our will must remain firm in God, and be ever directed towards Him—that is, we should be disposed to receive all things from the hand of God, from His justice, and from His bounty, with humble submission to His blessed will. Good and evil, health and sickness, prosperity and adversity, consolation and dryness, temptation and tranquillity, interior sweetness, trials and chastisements, all should be received by the soul with humility, patience, and resignation, as coming to us by the appointment of God. This is the only means of finding peace in the midst of great troubles and adversities.

PRAYER

GRANT, O God, that I may rely entirely on Thy power and goodness. Thou canst and wilt assist me: this shall be my support and confidence in the midst of the most grievous afflictions. Keep me from sin, and I am content to suffer all things else. When assailed by violent temptations, and as it were, in the midst of the shadow of death, I will place my trust in Thee, and fear no evil, because Thou wilt be with me. All I ask, O God, is that my trials may be as pleasing to Thee as they are painful to me, that by patient endurance they may become to me the way of penance, and conduct me to salvation. Amen.

CHAPTER 18

THAT TEMPORAL MISERIES ARE TO BE BORNE WITH EQUANIMITY, AFTER THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST

SON, I came down from Heaven for thy salvation; I took upon Me thy miseries, not of necessity, but moved thereto by charity; that thou mightest learn patience, and bear without repining temporal miseries.

For from the hour of My birth until I expired upon the Cross, I was not without the endurance of grief; moreover, I suffered great want of all earthly things.

I frequently heard many complaints against Me; I meekly bore disgrace and reproaches; for benefits I received ingratitude; for miracles, blasphemies; for heavenly doctrine, reproofs.

2. Lord, because Thou wast patient in Thy lifetime, herein especially fulfilling the commandment of Thy Father, it is fitting that I, a wretched sinner, should, according to Thy will, bear myself patiently, and, as long as Thou pleasest, support the burden of this corruptible life, in order to gain my salvation.

For though this present life is felt to be burdensome, yet it is now rendered, through Thy grace, very meritorious; and by Thine example and the footsteps of Thy Saints, more bright and supportable to the weak.

It is also much more full of consolation than it was formerly under the law, when the gate of Heaven remained shut; and even the way to Heaven seemed more obscure, when so few concerned themselves to seek the kingdom of Heaven.

Moreover, too, they who were then just, and to be saved, could not enter into Thy heavenly kingdom before Thy Passion, and the payment of our debt by Thy sacred death.

3. Oh, what great thanks am I bound to render unto Thee, for having vouchsafed to show me and all the faithful a right and good way to Thine everlasting kingdom!

For Thy life is our way; and by holy patience we walk on to Thee, Who art our crown.

If Thou hadst not gone before and instructed us, who would have cared to follow?

Alas, how many would have stayed afar off and a great way behind, had they not before their eyes Thy glorious example!

Behold, we are still tepid, notwithstanding all Thy miracles and instructions which we have heard; what, then, would it be if we had not so great light to follow Thee?

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

To animate ourselves to suffer in a proper manner we should often think of the Passion of Jesus Christ, Who suffered the punishment due to our sins. The afflictions, which God sends us are intended either to prove our fidelity or to punish us for our offenses. We should, therefore, receive them with humble submission, and in a truly penitential spirit; happy in being allowed to satisfy the justice of God in time, that we may contemplate His bounty for eternity. Our greatest trials are from ourselves. The rebellions of our passions, the bitterness of our hearts, our constitutional fretfulness, the wanderings of our imagination, and the whole man so opposite to God, would be insupportable did we not frequently think of the patience with which God waits for us, and endeavor to imitate Him Who bears with our infirmities. Let us, then, be patient under sufferings, that so, at the last hour, we may enjoy the consolation of having sanctified the evils of this life by a spirit of patience, and thus rendered them most available to salvation.

PRAYER

CAN we behold Thee, O Jesus, suffer so much for us and yet be unwilling to suffer anything for Thee? Can we believe that we must suffer with Thee

on earth, if we would reign with Thee in Heaven, and yet resist Thy chastisements or bear them with impatience? Dearest Savior, give us strength to suffer, and grant that the patience which Thou impartest to us may make us worthy of those eternal rewards which Thou hast promised us in the kingdom of Heaven. Amen.

CHAPTER 19

OF SUPPORTING INJURIES; AND WHO IS PROVED TO BE TRULY PATIENT

WHAT is it thou sayest, My son? Cease to complain, and consider My Passion, and that of the other Saints. Thou hast not yet resisted unto blood.

Little is it that thou sufferest, in comparison with those who have suffered so much; who have been so strongly tempted, so grievously afflicted, so many ways tried and exercised.

Thou oughtest then, to call to mind the heaviest sufferings of others, that thou mayst the easier bear the very little things thou sufferest.

And if to thee they seem not little, take heed lest this also proceed from thine impatience. But whether they be little or great, strive to bear them all with patience.

2. The better thou disposest thyself for suffering, the more wisely dost thou act, and the more dost thou merit; and thou wilt bear it more easily if both in mind and by habit thou art diligently prepared thereto.

Do not say, I cannot endure these things from such a man, and things of this kind are not to be suffered by me, for he hath done me a great injury, and he upbraideth me with things I never thought of; but I will suffer willingly from another, and as far as I shall judge fitting for me to suffer.

Such a thought is foolish, which considereth not the virtue of patience, nor by whom it shall be crowned, but rather weigheth the persons, and the offenses committed.

3. He is not a truly patient man who will suffer nothing, only so much as he shall think fit, and from whom he pleaseth.

The truly patient man mindeth not by what manner of man it is he is exercised, whether by his own superior, whether by an equal, or an inferior;

whether by a good and holy man, or by one that is perverse and unworthy.

But how much soever and how often soever any adversity happeneth to him from any creature, he taketh it all equally with thanksgiving as from the hand of God, and esteemeth it a great gain.

For with God not anything, how trifling soever, suffered for God's sake, shall go unrewarded.

4. Be thou, therefore, prepared to fight, if thou desirest to gain the victory.

Without conflict thou canst not attain the crown of patience.

If thou wilt not suffer, thou refusest to be crowned; but if thou desirest to be crowned, fight manfully, and endure patiently.

Without labor there is no coming to rest, nor without fighting do we arrive at victory.

5. Make, O Lord, that possible to me by grace, which seemeth impossible to me by nature.

Thou knowest how little I can bear, and that I am soon dejected when a small adversity ariseth.

Let all exercises of tribulation become lovely and most desirable to me for Thy Name's sake; for to suffer and to be afflicted for Thee is very healthful for my soul.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

THE practice of patience consists, first, in receiving all misfortunes as coming from the hand of God; secondly, in bearing all things with resignation; thirdly, in never murmuring under contradictions; fourthly, in believing that, having deserved Hell, no one can do us wrong or injustice; fifthly, in complaining only of ourselves; sixthly, in not speaking when the heart is full; seventhly, in thanking God for evil as well as for good; in a word, in frequently saying with holy Job: "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be His holy Name." Such is the practice of patience, which is so necessary for salvation, and yet so rare among Christians; for although there is no one but who suffers much, yet very few suffer as they ought.

Long and constant patience in our trials and difficulties is a penitential and powerful means of effacing sin, which, when God punishes in this life,

we may hope He will not punish in the next.

PRAYER

GRANT, O my Savior, that Thy patience in bearing with me and suffering for me may be the model and principle of my patience in suffering for Thee; and that, entering into Thy designs for my salvation, which Thou wouldst secure for me by the good use I make of afflictions, I may receive all things with humble submission to Thy holy will. Amen.

CHAPTER 20

OF THE CONFESSION OF OUR OWN INFIRMITY, AND OF THE MISERIES OF THIS LIFE

I WILL confess against myself my injustice; I will confess to Thee, O Lord, my infirmity.

It is oftentimes a small thing which casteth me down and troubleth me.

I purpose to behave myself valiantly; but when a small temptation cometh, I am brought into great straits.

It is sometimes a very trifling thing, whence a grievous temptation proceedeth.

And when I think myself somewhat safe, when I least apprehend it, I find myself sometimes almost overcome by a light blast.

2. Behold, then, O Lord, my abjection and frailty, every way known to Thee.

Have pity on me, and draw me out of the mire, that I stick not fast therein, that I may not be utterly cast down forever.

This it is which often drives me back, and confounds me in Thy sight, that I am so subject to fall, and so powerless to resist my passions.

And although I do not altogether consent, yet their assaults are troublesome and grievous to me; and I am weary of thus always living in conflict.

Hence my infirmity is made known to me: because abominable imaginations much more easily rush in upon me than they forsake me.

3. Oh, that Thou, most mighty God of Israel, zealous Lover of faithful souls, wouldst regard the labor and sorrow of Thy servant, and stand by him

in all his undertakings!

Strengthen me with heavenly fortitude, lest the old man, the miserable flesh not fully subdued to the spirit, prevail and get the upper hand; against which we must battle so long as we breathe in this most wretched life.

Alas, what kind of life is this, where afflictions and miseries are never wanting, where all things are full of snares and enemies!

For when one tribulation or temptation is gone, another approacheth; yea, and whilst the first conflict still lasteth, many others come on, and those unexpected.

4. And how is it possible that the life of man can be loved, which hath so great bitterness, and is subject to so many calamities and miseries?

How even can it be called life, which generateth so many deaths and plagues?

And yet it is loved, and many seek their delight in it.

The world is censured as deceitful and vain; and yet it is with reluctance abandoned, because the concupiscence of the flesh too much prevails.

But some things draw us to love the world; others to despise it.

The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and pride of life, draw us to the love of the world; but the pains and miseries which justly follow these things breed a hatred and loathing of the world.

5. But, alas, evil delights prevail over a mind that is given to the world, and under thorns she imagineth there are delights: because she hath neither seen nor tasted the sweetness of God, nor the internal pleasure of virtue.

But such as perfectly despise the world, and study to live to God under holy discipline, they are not unconscious of that Divine sweetness promised to those who forsake all; and they clearly see both how grievously the world is mistaken, and in how many ways it is deceived.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

IT is not sufficient to know and to feel our weaknesses and miseries, and our continual danger of perishing eternally by yielding to our passions; we should also at the sight of them humble ourselves before God, and place our whole confidence in Him. We should incessantly bewail our exile, and cast and support ourselves upon the bounty of God. We should never remain in the state of sin, tepidity, or infidelity in which our weakness too often

engages us, but immediately arise after we have fallen and speedily return to our heavenly Father when we find we have gone astray.

This life is so replete with temptations, pains, and miseries, that it becomes insupportable to a soul that loves God, and is afraid of offending Him. How shall I live, does it exclaim, and not sin? Yet how shall I sin and still live? To be ever falling and then rising again; ever resisting my passions, and fighting against the irregular desires of my heart—is this life? It is continual death. But let us not grow weary of repressing, of fighting, and conquering our predominant passions, for in this consists the merit of a supernatural life, of a life conducting to eternal happiness.

PRAYER

I ACKNOWLEDGE, O God, that life would be unsatisfactory had I no trial of suffering for Thy sake. Grant, therefore, that, when weary of myself, and fatigued with the miseries of this life, I may commit them all to Thy most merciful Providence. Support me by Thy bounty, and give me patience and fidelity to endure myself, and to suffer whatever Thou shalt appoint. Amen.

CHAPTER 21

THAT WE ARE TO REST IN GOD ABOVE ALL GOODS AND GIFTS

ABOVE all things, and in all things, do thou, my soul, rest always in the Lord, for He is the eternal rest of the Saints.

Give me, O most sweet and loving Jesus, to repose in Thee above all things created; above all health and beauty; above all glory and honor; above all power and dignity; above all knowledge and subtlety; above all riches and arts; above all joy and gladness; above all fame and praise; above all sweetness and consolation; above all hope and promise; above all merit and desire; above all gifts and presents that Thou canst give and infuse; above all joy and jubilation that the mind can contain or feel; in fine, above all Angels and Archangels, and all the host of Heaven; above all things visible and invisible; and above all that is not Thee, my God; for Thou, O Lord my God, art supremely good above all things.

2. Thou alone art most high; Thou alone most powerful; Thou alone most full and most sufficient; Thou alone most sweet and most full of consolation.

Thou alone most beautiful and most loving; Thou alone most noble and most glorious above all things; in Whom are all that are both good and perfect, and always have been and always will be.

And therefore all is too little and insufficient, whatever Thou bestowest upon me, that is not Thyself; and whatever Thou revealeth to me concerning Thyself, or promiseth, as long as I see Thee not, nor fully possess Thee: because indeed my heart cannot truly rest, nor be entirely contented, till it rest in Thee, and transcend every gift and every creature.

3. O my most beloved Spouse, Christ Jesus, most pure Lover, Lord of the whole creation! Who will give me wings of true liberty, to fly and repose in Thee?

Oh, when shall it be fully granted me to be free, and to see how sweet Thou art, O Lord my God?

When shall I fully collect myself in Thee, that through Thy love I may not feel myself, but Thee alone, above all feeling and measure, in a manner not known to all?

But now I often lament, and bear with grief my unhappiness.

Because many evils happen in this vale of miseries, which frequently disturb me, afflict me, and cast a cloud over me; often do they hinder and distract me, allure and entangle me, so that I can neither have free access to Thee, nor enjoy Thy sweet embraces, which are ever present to blessed spirits.

Oh, let my sighs move Thee, and this my manifold desolation upon earth.

4. O Jesus, brightness of eternal glory, comfort of the pilgrim soul, with Thee is my mouth without voice, and my silence speaketh to Thee.

How long doth my Lord delay to come? Let Him come to me, His poor servant, and make me joyful. Let Him stretch forth His hand, and deliver me, wretched, from all anguish.

Come, oh, come, for without Thee I can never have one joyful day nor hour; for Thou art my joy, and without Thee my table is empty.

I am miserable, and in a manner imprisoned and weighed down with fetters, till with the light of Thy presence Thou comfortest me, givest me liberty, and showest me Thy friendly countenance.

5. Let others seek, instead of Thee, whatever else they please; but nothing else meanwhile doth or shall please me, but Thou, my God, my hope, my eternal salvation.

I will not hold my peace, nor will I cease to pray, till Thy grace return, and Thou sayest interiorly to me:

6. Behold, here I am; behold, I come to thee, because thou hast called Me!

Thy tears, and the desire of thy soul, thy humiliation and contrition of heart, have inclined and brought Me to thee.

7. And I said, O Lord I have called upon Thee, and have desired to enjoy Thee, and I am prepared to reject all things for Thy sake.

For Thou didst first stir me up that I should seek Thee.

Be Thou therefore blessed, O Lord, Who hath showed this goodness to Thy servant, according to the multitude of Thy mercies.

What more hath Thy servant to say in Thy presence but to humble himself exceedingly before Thee, mindful always of his own iniquity and vileness?

For there is none like unto Thee amongst all the wonders of Heaven and earth.

Thy works are exceedingly good, Thy judgments true, and by Thy providence the universe is ruled.

Praise, therefore, and glory be to Thee, O Wisdom of the Father; let my tongue, my soul, and all things created, join in praising and blessing Thee.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

WE should prefer God before all things—that is, we should labor to forsake and renounce ourselves in all things, die to all self-satisfaction, and deny ourselves many lawful pleasures, to punish ourselves for having indulged in those which are criminal. We should submit, give up, and immolate ourselves to God, rise superior to all created things, direct our hearts towards Him, and lose ourselves in His perfections; keep ourselves in a state of sovereign and interior adoration, to which all should yield; and by our actions, by the sacrifice of everything that is dear to us, establish Him the absolute Master and God of our hearts. To love God, so as to delight only in Him, is indeed a heaven upon earth, and, as it were, a foretaste of a happy eternity; but to arrive at this, we must disengage ourselves from those amusements of the mind which dissipate and withdraw it from God, and from those attachments of the heart which bind it to creatures; that so the soul, being free from itself and from the servitude of the passions, may take the wings of the dove, fly away towards God, and repose in Him alone.

PRAYER

My God, my sovereign good, and only consolation, how dare I raise myself towards Thee, draw Thee to myself, and firmly unite myself to Thee—I who am filled, penetrated, and loaded with so many miseries, irregular inclinations towards evil, and continual repugnance to good—I who am

every moment falling from Thee to myself, and from myself into sin—in a word, I who meet with so many obstacles within myself, which, like a wall of separation, would hinder me from being united to Thee? But what, O Lord, is impossible to me is easy to Thee; in Thy power and bounty I place all my hopes. Thou knowest my condition, and if Thou wilt Thou canst assist me. I groan incessantly under the load of my infirmities. I address myself to Thee, to be delivered from them by Thy mercy. I find no rest, nor content, nor happiness but in and by Thee. Come then, O God, give consolation and support to my soul, which desires only Thee, to live only by and for its God. I languish and am on fire with the desire of possessing Thee without the fear of ever losing Thee. Reject me not, O infinitely amiable God! for I can no longer live separated and removed at a distance from Thee. Amen.

CHAPTER 22

ON THE REMEMBRANCE OF THE MANIFOLD BENEFITS OF GOD

OPEN, O Lord, my heart in Thy law, and teach me to walk in Thy Commandments. Give me to understand Thy will, and to commemorate with great reverence and diligent consideration all Thy benefits, as well in general as in particular, that so henceforth I may be able worthily to return thanks for them.

But I know, and confess, indeed, that I am not able to return Thee due thanks of praise, not even for the least.

I am less than any of Thy benefits bestowed upon me; and when I consider Thine excellency, my spirit fainteth before the greatness thereof.

2. All things that we have in soul and body, and whatsoever outwardly and inwardly, naturally or supernaturally, we possess, are Thy benefits, and celebrate Thy bounty, mercy, and goodness, from Whom we have received all good.

Although one hath received more, another less, yet all are Thine, and without Thee even the least cannot be had.

He who hath received greater things, cannot glory of his own merit, nor extol himself above others, nor exult over the lesser; because he is indeed greater and better, who attributeth less to himself, and is more humble and devout in returning thanks.

And he who esteemeth himself the vilest of all men, and judgeth himself the most unworthy, is fitted to receive still greater blessings.

3. But he who hath received fewer ought not to be saddened, nor take it ill; nor envy him that is more enriched; but attend rather to Thee, and very

much praise Thy goodness, for that Thou bestowest Thy gifts so plentifully, so freely and willingly, without acceptance of persons.

All things are from Thee, and therefore Thou art to be praised in all.

Thou knowest what is expedient to be given to each; and why this one hath less, and the other more, is not ours to decide, but Thine, with Whom are determined the merits of each.

4. Wherefore, O Lord God, I deem it a great benefit not to have much which outwardly and according to men might appear praiseworthy and glorious; so that a person, considering his own poverty and meanness, ought to be so far from conceiving thereat despondency, or sadness, or dejection, that he should rather take consolation and great joy.

For Thou, O God, hast chosen the poor and the humble, and those that are despised by this world, for Thy familiar friends and servants.

The Apostles themselves are witnesses, whom Thou hast appointed rulers over the whole earth.

Arid yet they lived in this world without complaint, so humble and simple, without any malice or guile, that they even rejoiced to suffer reproaches for Thy Name; and what things the world flies from, those they embraced with great affection.

5. Nothing, therefore, ought to give so great a joy to one that loveth Thee and knoweth Thy benefits as the accomplishment of Thy will in himself, and the good pleasure of Thine eternal appointment.

With which He ought to be so far contented and comforted as to be as willing to be the least as anyone would wish to be the greatest; to enjoy as much peace and content in the lowest place as in the highest; and to be as willing to be despicable and mean and of no name and repute, as to be more honorable and of greater rank in the world than others.

For Thy will and the love of Thy honor ought to take precedence of all things, and to comfort and please one more than any benefits whatsoever which have been or can be given.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

HAPPY the soul that is little in its own eyes, and is as content to be below all men, as others are desirous to be above them; that makes its merit and delight consist in being unknown, abject, and despised, and longs as

ardently to become the reproach and the outcast of the world, as others do to be esteemed and honored by it. Such a soul is after God's own heart; it is great in the eyes of His majesty, and by its humility renders itself worthy of His greatest graces. To arrive at this degree of perfection we must love an abject and hidden life, do nothing for the sake of esteem or praise, cheerfully receive contempt and adversity as our due; accept, with humble submission, blame, contradiction, and calumny, and nourish ourselves with reproaches in imitation of Jesus Christ; esteeming it our greatest honor thus to resemble Him.

PRAYER

WHEN, O my Savior, shall the esteem of men, and the honor of the world become, as they ought to be, the disdain and the dread of my soul; humiliation and contempt, its joy and delight? Grant that the love which Thou hadst for contempt, Thou Who art the adoration of the Angels, may be the motive and the rule of my patience in bearing with it, who have deserved to become the eternal object of Thy hatred and malediction. Amen.

CHAPTER 23

OF FOUR THINGS WHICH BRING MUCH PEACE

SON, now will I teach thee the way of peace and of true liberty.

2. Do, Lord, as Thou sayest, for I shall be very glad to hear it.

3. Study, My son, to do rather the will of another than thine own.

Ever choose rather to have less than more.

Always seek the lowest place, and to be subject to every one.

Desire always and pray that the will of God may be entirely fulfilled in thee.

Behold, such a one entereth within the borders of peace and rest.

4. Lord, this Thy short address containeth in itself much perfection.

It is short in words, but full in meaning, and abounding in fruit.

If I could but faithfully observe it, I should not be so easily troubled.

For as often as I find myself disquieted and disturbed, I am sensible it is because I have gone back from this doctrine.

But Thou, O Lord, Who canst do all things, and always lovest the profit of the soul, increase in me a greater grace, that I may fulfill this Thy word and accomplish my salvation.

A Prayer against evil thoughts.

5. O Lord my God, depart not far from me; O my God, have regard to help me; for divers evil thoughts have risen up against me, and great fears afflict my soul.

How shall I pass through them without hurt? how shall I break them in pieces?

6. I, saith He, will go before thee, and will humble the great ones of the earth.

I will open the gates of the prison, and will reveal to thee hidden secrets.

7. Do, Lord, as Thou gayest, and let all wicked thoughts fly from before Thy face.

This is my hope and my only comfort; to fly to Thee in all tribulations, to confide in Thee, to call on Thee from my inmost heart, and patiently to expect Thy consolation.

A Prayer for the enlightening of the mind.

8. Enlighten me O good Jesus; the brightness of internal light; and draw off all darkness from the dwelling of my heart.

Restrain my many wandering thoughts, and destroy the temptations that violently assault me.

Fight strongly for me, and overcome these evil beasts—I mean, these alluring concupiscences—that peace may be made in Thy power, and the abundance of Thy praise may resound in Thy holy court—that is, in a clean conscience.

Command the winds and storms; say to the sea, Be still; to the north wind, Blow thou not; and there shall be a great calm.

9. Send forth Thy light and Thy truth, that they may shine upon the earth; for I am an earth that is empty and void, till Thou enlightenest me.

Pour forth Thy grace from above; water my heart with the dew of Heaven; supply fresh waters of devotion, to irrigate the face of the earth, to bring forth good and perfect fruit.

Lift up my mind, oppressed with the load of sins, and raise my whole desires towards heavenly things; that having tasted the sweetness of supernal happiness, I may have no pleasure in thinking of the things of earth.

10. Snatch me away, and rescue me from all unstable comfort of creatures; for no created thing can fully quiet and satisfy my desire.

Join me to Thyself with an inseparable bond of love; for Thou alone art sufficient for the soul that loveth Thee, and without Thee all other things are frivolous.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

As no one can escape the sight or the justice of God, so we should, in the first place, keep a continual watch over ourselves; secondly, we should

never allow ourselves anything that may displease God; thirdly, we should walk always in His presence, and do all things with an intention of pleasing Him, follow on all occasions the motions of His grace, never resist His holy will, nor defer its accomplishment for one moment; so that there may be no interval between our knowing, willing, and performing what He requires of us. Nothing is so agreeable to God as to confide in Him, to trust in all things to Him, to abandon ourselves entirely to Him, and to depend completely upon Him. Happy the soul which, receiving all from His hands, resigns itself in all things to His holy will, wills only what He wills, and wills all that happens to it, because He so ordains it.

PRAYER

EACH day do I ask of Thee, O Lord, that Thy will may be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Hearken to my prayer, I beseech Thee, and grant that I may perform all my actions in compliance with Thy holy will, and ever make it the sole rule of my conduct. Deliver my soul from the slavery of its passions. Grant that they may all yield to Thine empire, and that to please and love Thee may ever be the predominant desire of my soul. Amen.

CHAPTER 24

OF AVOIDING CURIOUS INQUIRY RESPECTING THE LIFE OF OTHERS

SON, be not curious, and give not way to useless cares.

What is this or that to thee? Follow thou Me.

For what is it to thee whether that man be such or such, or whether this man do or speak this or that?

Thou dost not need to answer for others, but thou shalt for thyself give an account; why, therefore, dost thou meddle with them?

Behold, I know all men, and see all things that are done under the sun; and I know how it is with everyone—what he thinks, what he would have, and at what his intention aims.

To Me, therefore, are all things to be committed; but do thou keep thyself in good peace; and let the unquiet be as unquiet as he will.

Whatsoever he shall do or say, will come upon himself, because he cannot deceive Me.

Be not solicitous for the shadow of a great name, nor for acquaintance with many, nor for the particular love of individuals.

For these things generate distractions and great darkness in the heart.

I would gladly speak My word to thee, and reveal My secrets, if thou wouldst diligently observe My coming, and open to Me the door of thy heart.

Be circumspect, and watch in prayers, and humble thyself in all things.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

IN order to enjoy true peace we must, in the first place, avoid all curiosity as to what regards our neighbor; secondly, we must receive with patience all

the afflictions which arise either from the justice of God, or the injustice of man; thirdly, we must suffer and accustom ourselves to the privation of all joy and consolation; sacrifice to God all the pleasures of our mind, heart, and senses; and thank Him for not permitting us to find any real satisfaction but in Him.

PRAYER

I ACKNOWLEDGE, O God, that my only desire and the only curiosity of my mind, is to know whether I am at present in the state of grace, and whether I shall so continue until death; whether Thou hast pardoned me my sins, and whether Thou wilt grant me that greatest of all Thy mercies, final perseverance. But I will resign this desire to Thee, I will sacrifice this security, and will hope from Thy pure bounty this greatest of all graces. Amen.

CHAPTER 25

IN WHAT FIRM PEACE OF THE HEART AND TRUE PROGRESS DOTH CONSIST

SON, I have said: Peace I leave to you. My peace I give to you; not as the world giveth do I give to you.

Peace all desire; but all care not for those things which appertain to true peace.

My peace is with the humble and meek of heart: thy peace shall be in much patience.

If thou wilt hear Me, and follow My voice, thou mayst enjoy much peace.

2. What, then, shall I do, Lord?

3. In everything attend to thyself, what thou art doing, and what thou art saying; and direct thy whole attention to this, that thou mayst please Me alone, and neither desire nor seek anything out of Me.

And as for the sayings or doings of others, judge nothing rashly, neither busy thyself with things not committed to thy care; and thus may it be brought about, that thou shalt be little or seldom disturbed.

But never to feel any grief at all, nor to suffer any trouble of heart or body, is not the state of this present life, but of everlasting rest.

Think not, therefore, that thou hast found true peace, if thou feel no burden; nor that then all is well, if thou have no adversary; nor that thou hast attained to perfection, if all things be done according to thine inclination.

Neither do thou conceive a great notion of thyself, or imagine thyself to be especially beloved, if thou experience great devotion and sweetness; for it is not in such things as these that a true lover of virtue is known; nor doth the progress and perfection of a man consist in these things.

4. In what, then, O Lord?

5. In offering thyself with thy whole heart to the Divine will; not seeking the things that are thine, either in little or great, either in time or in eternity.

So that with the same equal countenance thou continue giving thanks both in prosperity and adversity, weighing all things in an equal balance.

If thou come to be so valiant and long-suffering in hope, that when interior comfort is withdrawn, thou canst prepare thy heart to suffer still more; and dost not justify thyself, as if thou oughtest not to suffer such and so great things, but acknowledgest Me to be just in all My appointments, and praisest My holy Name; then thou walkest in the true and right way of peace, and mayst entertain an undoubting hope to see My face again with great joy.

And if thou arrive at an entire contempt of thyself, know that then thou shalt enjoy an abundance of peace, as much as is possible in this thy earthly sojourn.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

WE should sacrifice ourselves entirely to the will of God, and meet with equanimity whatever He decrees for us; that is, we should, first, desire nothing which is not the will of God; secondly, we should not refuse any of the adversities He sends us; thirdly, we should bring ourselves to a state of perfect self-contempt, so as to receive humiliations and contradictions as our due; fourthly, we should remain firm, constant, and faithful to what God desires of us, although we experience neither consolation, nor delight, nor security; fifthly, we should, in a word, make our delight the delight of God's own heart—that is, we should accomplish His holy will.

PRAYER

YES, O Jesus, in all things I resign myself entirely to Thy dominion, I will confide in Thee, and abandon myself wholly to Thee, persuaded that my salvation can never be more secure than when entrusted to Thee, my Savior.

Grant, therefore, that I may live under Thine eyes and in Thy hand, in a reverential and continual remembrance of Thy presence, and an exact dependence upon Thy holy will, being assured that Thou wilt promote my

salvation in proportion as I endeavor to please and love Thee and to mortify and hate myself. Amen.

CHAPTER 26

OF THE EXCELLENCE OF A FREE MIND, WHICH DEVOUT PRAYER RATHER MERITETH THAN READING

LORD, this is the work of a perfect man, never to let the mind slacken from attending to heavenly things, and amidst many cares to pass on as it were without care: not after the manner of an indolent person, but by a certain prerogative of a free mind, not cleaving with an inordinate affection to anything created.

2. Preserve me, I beseech Thee, O most merciful Lord God, from the cares of this life, that I be not too much entangled by them; from the many necessities of the body, that I be not ensnared by pleasure; and from all obstruction of mind, lest, overcome by molestations, I be quite cast down.

I do not say from those things which worldly vanity covets with so much eagerness; but from those miseries, which, by the common curse of our mortality, penally weigh down and keep back the soul of Thy servant from entering as often as it pleaseth into liberty of spirit.

3. O my God, unspeakable sweetness, turn from me into bitterness all carnal consolation, which withdraweth me from the love of things eternal, and wickedly allureth me to itself, by setting before me some delightful present good.

Let not flesh and blood, O my God, prevail over me; let it not overcome me; let not the world and its transitory glory deceive me; let not the devil supplant me by his craftiness.

Give me courage to resist, patience to endure, and constancy to persevere.

Give me, instead of all worldly consolation, the most sweet unction of Thy Spirit; and instead of carnal love, infuse into me the love of Thy Name.

4. Behold! eating, drinking, clothing, and other necessities appertaining to the support of the body; are burdensome to the fervent spirit.

Grant that I may use such necessary supports with moderation, and not be entangled with any inordinate affection.

It is not lawful to cast them all away, for nature must be sustained; but to require superfluities, and such things as are rather for delight, Thy holy law forbiddeth; for otherwise the flesh would grow insolent against the spirit.

In all this, I beseech Thee, let Thy hand govern and teach me, that I may in no way exceed.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

THE mortification of the senses, and the victory over our own humors, are so essential for salvation, that, in truth, the soul which gives itself to exterior objects, and is often more engaged upon itself than upon God, is totally unworthy of Him; because, when it gives itself to its passions, it can have no desire to please God. Ah! how will it change its ideas and sentiments at the hour of death! when, alone with God, it shall hear from Him this reproach: I have not been thine in time, I will not be thine for eternity? Thou hast preferred the pleasures of sense to the happiness of pleasing Me; it is just thou shouldst now be consigned to all the horrors of a miserable eternity!

“Thou didst receive good things in thy lifetime,” was it said to the rich man when he complained in hell of the rigor of his torments; and so will it one day be said to those sensual souls who will not now restrain nor mortify themselves in anything, unless they endeavor to prefer the happiness of eternity to the pleasures of time, and to merit heaven by self-control.

PRAYER

GRANT me, O God, strength and courage to restrain the desires of my heart, that I may be free to possess Thee; grant that, renouncing all sensual gratifications, I may become pleasing and acceptable to Thee; happy in sacrificing all that can give me pleasure for the sake of pleasing Thee, and in spending my life in repairing Thy past displeasure by penance, and in

preventing it in the future by fidelity. O penance, what charms hast thou for a soul that is penetrated with the love of God, and is resolved to avenge Him, and to punish itself! Amen.

CHAPTER 27

THAT SELF-LOVE CHIEFLY KEEPETH US BACK FROM THE SOVEREIGN GOOD

My son, thou must give all for all, and be nothing of thine own.

Know that the love of thyself is more hurtful to thee than anything of the world.

Everything, according to the love and inclination which thou hast to it, cleaveth to thee more or less.

If thy love be pure, simple, and well-ordered, thou shalt not be in captivity to anything.

Covet not that which thou mayst not have.

Seek not to have that which may embarrass thee and deprive thee of thine inward liberty.

It is wonderful that thou wilt not: from the very bottom of thy heart, commit thyself wholly to Me, with all things that thou canst desire or have.

2. Why dost thou pine away with vain grief? Why art thou so worn with superfluous cares?

Be resigned to My good pleasure, and thou shalt suffer no loss.

If thou seekest this or that, or wouldst be here or there for thine own interests' sake, and the more to indulge thine own will, thou wilt never be at rest, nor free from solicitude; for in everything there will be found some defect, and in every place there will be some one that will cross thee.

3. Thy welfare, therefore, lies not in obtaining and multiplying any external things, but rather in condemning them, and utterly rooting them out of the heart; which I would not have thee to understand only with regard to

money and riches, but also with regard to the ambition of honor, and the desire of empty praise; and which things pass away with the world.

The place avails little, if the spirit of fervor be wanting; neither shall that peace stand long which is sought from without, if the state of the heart want the true foundation—that is, if thou stand not in Me: thou mayst change, but shalt not better thyself.

For, when occasion offers and is laid hold of, thou shalt find that which thou didst fly from, and more.

A Prayer for the cleansing of the heart, and for heavenly wisdom.

4. Confirm me, O God, by the grace of Thy Holy Spirit. Grant me power to be strengthened in the inner man, and to cast out of my heart all unprofitable care and trouble; not to be drawn away with various desires of anything whatsoever, be it vile or precious, but to view all things as passing away, and myself also as passing with them.

For nothing is lasting under the sun, where all is vanity and affliction of spirit. Oh, how wise is he who thus judgeth!

5. Grant me, O Lord, celestial wisdom, that I may learn above all things to seek Thee and to find Thee; above all things to relish Thee and to love Thee, and to understand all other things as they are, according to the order of Thy wisdom.

Grant that I may prudently avoid him that flattereth me, and patiently bear with him that contradicteth me.

For this is great wisdom, not to be moved with every wind of words, nor to give ear to the wicked, flattering siren; for thus shall we go on securely in the way we have begun.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

IF we would give ourselves unreservedly to God, we must, first, seek ourselves in nothing we present to Him; secondly, we must yield ourselves to Him on all occasions, and prefer His will to the suggestions of self-love; thirdly, we must not allow nor forgive ourselves anything we know to be displeasing to Him; fourthly, we must make Him the absolute master and proprietor of our whole hearts, so that He may dispose of all that we have and are according to His holy will; fifthly, we must live in a state of dependence and constant docility to the motions of His grace.

‘To give ourselves thus to God without reserve is the true means of possessing Him and living in peace. But, alas! how few give themselves thus to Him! and how many are His only by halves—divide their hearts between Him and creatures, and love themselves while they pretend to love Him, although they are well aware that all division is injurious to Him, and hinders Him from reigning absolutely in their hearts, of which He cannot be the master if He be not the sole possessor; nor reign as God within them, if He reign not alone and be preferred before all things else.

PRAYER

SUFFER not my heart, O Lord, which was made only for Thee, which is entirely the work of Thy hands, and the price of Thy Blood, to belong to any other but Thee, or to love anything equally or in preference to Thee. Thy delight is to be with the children of men, and why is not Thy presence my felicity? Why art Thou not more to me than all things else—Thou Who art my only and sovereign Good? I am resolved henceforth absolutely to love Thee alone. I will be all Thine, seek to please Thee in all things, and breathe only Thy love. Amen.

CHAPTER 28

AGAINST THE TONGUES OF DETRACTORS

SON, take it not to heart if some people think ill of thee, and say of thee what thou art not willing to hear. Thou oughtest to think worse things of thyself, and to believe no one weaker than thyself.

If thou walkest interiorly, thou wilt make small account of flying words from without.

It is no small prudence to be silent in the evil time, and to turn within to Me, and not to be disturbed with the judgment of man.

2. Let not thy peace depend on the tongues of men: for whether they put a good or bad construction on what thou doest, thou art still what thou art.

Where is true peace or true glory? Is it not in Me?

And he who neither desireth to please nor feareth to displease men shall enjoy much peace.

From inordinate love and vain fear ariseth all disquiet of heart and distraction of the senses.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

NOTHING is so apt to give us uneasiness and trouble as the judgments and observations of others concerning us. We consider it a happiness to please men, and a misfortune to meet with their contempt: and yet what is the esteem or the form of the world but a shadow, a smoke, a vapor which passes away, and adds nothing to what we really are or ought to be? Whatever we are in the eyes of God, so much are we and no more, and therefore we should make no account of the favorable or mean opinions of others.

O human respect! When wilt thou give place to the reverence which we owe to God? Alas! how do human considerations destroy in us all that is pleasing to Him! Instead of inquiring what will be most pleasing to Jesus Christ, we think only of what others will say of us. But is it not better to obey God rather than men, to please Him rather than to please the world? Why, then, do we not endeavor to do so?

PRAYER

SUFFER not, O Lord, human respect, ever to take place of the reverence which I owe to Thee; but grant that a respectful and predominant sense of Thy presence and of Thy will may induce me to perform all my actions, to quit and to suffer all things, for Thy love. O my Savior and my Judge, unite my heart to Thyself by a dread of displeasing Thee, and a desire of being always agreeable in Thy sight. Grant that, dying incessantly to myself, I may live only to Thee, and by often renewing my intention of pleasing Thee, succeed in gaining Thy love. Grant that I may so accustom myself to love Thee during life, that the last motion of my heart may be a fervent act of my love for Thee. Amen.

CHAPTER 29

HOW WHEN TRIBULATION PRESSETH, WE MUCH CALL UPON AND BLESS GOD

BLESSED, O Lord, be Thy Name forever, Who hast been pleased that this trial and tribulation should come upon me.

I cannot escape it, but must of necessity fly to Thee; that Thou mayst help me, and turn it to my good.

Lord, I am now in tribulation, and my heart is not at ease; but I am much afflicted with my present suffering.

And now, beloved Father, what shall I say? I am taken, Lord, in these straits; O save me from this hour.

But for this reason I came unto this hour, that Thou mightest be glorified, when I shall have been exceedingly humbled and delivered by Thee.

May it please Thee, O Lord, to deliver me; for, poor wretch that I am! what can I do and whither shall I go without Thee?

Give me patience, O Lord, even at this time.

Help me, O my God, and I will not fear, how much soever I may be distressed.

2. And now, in the midst of these things, what shall I say? Lord, Thy will be done: I have well deserved to be afflicted and distressed.

It behooves me to bear it; and would that it were with patience, till the storm pass over, and it grow better.

But Thine almighty hand is able to take away from me this temptation also, and to moderate its violence, that I sink not altogether under it; as Thou hast often done heretofore for me, O my God, my mercy!

And how much the more difficult this is to me, so much the easier to Thee is this change of the right hand of the Most High.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

TEMPTATIONS must ever be resisted with firmness and constancy; and, that we may be able to overcome them, we must go with confidence to the throne of God. He often permits us to be so hard pressed, and so weighed down by the load of our miseries, as to leave us no other means of making resistance and maintaining our ground, but that of keeping ourselves closely united to Him, and relying upon Him for the assistance of His grace. The fewer resources we find within ourselves, the more should we be induced to seek for them in God, and when temptation has nearly overcome us, and we are in danger of yielding, cry out with the Apostles: "Lord, save us or we perish;" our eyes are raised up to Thee, Who art our Father and our God, able and willing to assist us, our Savior and Redeemer, engaged to rescue and to save us. The more I experience my own weakness and inability, the more do I hope for strength from Thee. It is Thy glory and Thy delight to defend me, for my soul is the work of Thy hands, and the price of Thy Precious Blood.

PRAYER

WE are sensible, O Lord, that without Thee, of ourselves, in the time of temptation, we should lose courage, yield to sin; and be vanquished: but we know also that Thou canst do all things, and art willing to assist and to save us. Penetrated with a sense of our own miseries, yet full of confidence in Thy mercy, we place ourselves in Thy hands, repose all our hopes in Thee, trust in Thy bounty, renounce whatever is displeasing to Thee, and desire only the accomplishment of Thy will. Grant us the grace of living and dying in those holy dispositions; and may they ever induce Thee to show us Thy mercy. Amen.

CHAPTER 30

OF ASKING THE DIVINE ASSISTANCE, AND OF CONFIDENCE OF RECOVERING GRACE

SON, I am the Lord, Who giveth strength in the day of tribulation. Come to Me when it is not well with thee.

This is that which most of all hindereth heavenly comfort, that thou art too slow in betaking thyself to prayer.

For before thou earnestly prayest to Me, thou seekest in the meantime many comforts, and delightest thyself in outward things.

And hence it comes that all things avail thee little, till thou consider well that I am He Who delivereth those that trust in Me; nor is there out of Me any powerful help, nor profitable counsel, nor lasting remedy.

But now having recovered thy spirit after the storm, grow thou strong again, in the light of My mercies; for I am at hand, saith the Lord, to repair all, not only to the full, but even with abundance and above measure.

2. Is anything difficult to Me? Or shall I be like to one promising and not performing?

Where is thy faith? Stand firmly and perseveringly; practice endurance and manly courage; comfort will come to thee in due season.

Wait for Me, wait; I will come and cure thee.

It is a temptation that troubleth thee, and a vain fear that affrighteth thee.

What doth the solicitude about future contingencies bring thee, but only sorrow upon sorrow? Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof.

It is vain and useless to conceive either grief or joy for future things, which perhaps shall never come to pass.

3. But it is in human nature to be deluded with such imaginations; and it is the sign of a soul as yet weak to be so easily drawn away by the suggestions of the enemy.

For he careth not whether it be with things true or false that he abuseth and deceiveth thee; whether he overthrow thee with the love of things present or the fear of things to come.

Let not, therefore, thy heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

Believe thou in Me, and trust in My mercy.

When thou thinkest I am far from thee, I am often nearest to thee.

When thou judgest that almost all is lost, then oftentimes it is that thou art in the way of the greatest gain of merit.

All is not lost when anything falls out contrary to what thou wouldst have it.

Thou must not judge according to thy present feeling, nor give thyself up in such manner to any trouble, whencesoever it comes, nor take it so as if all hope of deliverance were gone.

4. Think not thyself wholly forsaken, though for a time I have sent thee some tribulation, or withdrawn from thee thy wished-for consolation; for this is the way to the kingdom of Heaven.

And without doubt it is more expedient for thee and for the rest of My servants, that you be exercised in adversity, than that you should have all things according to your inclination.

I know thy most hidden thoughts, and that it is very expedient for thy salvation that thou sometimes be left without any savor of sweetness, lest perchance thou be puffed up with good success, and take complacency in thyself, imagining thyself to be what thou art not.

What I have given, I have the power to take away, and restore as it pleases Me.

5. When I have given it, it is still Mine; when I withdraw it again, I take not anything that is thine; for every best gift and perfect gift is Mine.

If I send thee affliction or any adversity, repine not, neither let thy heart be cast down.

I can quickly raise thee up again, and turn all thy burden into joy.

Nevertheless, I am just, and greatly to be praised, when I thus deal with thee.

6. If thou thinkest rightly, and considerest things in truth, thou oughtest never to be so much dejected and troubled at adversity.

But thou shouldst rather rejoice and give thanks, yea, account this as a special subject of joy, that afflicting thee with sorrows I do not spare thee.

“As the Father hath loved Me, I also love you,” said I to My beloved disciples; whom certainly I did not send to temporal joys, but to great conflicts; not to honors, but to contempt; not to idleness, but to labors; not to rest, but to bring forth much fruit in patience. Remember thou these words, O My son.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

I AM the Lord, saith the Almighty, by the mouth of one of His Prophets, Who giveth strength to souls in the day of trouble, and delivereth those from danger who put their trust in Me. How consoling, how encouraging and supporting, are these words to a soul that, in the time of temptation and adversity, is faithful and constant to what God requires of it! This is what the Scripture calls to wait for and to support the Lord.

Believe in Me, says our Blessed Savior, and thy heart shall not be troubled nor fear. Wherefore, upon occasion of interior or exterior affliction, we should, in the first place, have recourse to God with confidence; secondly, we should resign ourselves to His blessed will; thirdly, we should not neglect any of our spiritual exercises; fourthly, we should subdue ourselves, restrain and renounce ourselves in all things, that we may act in concert with God; fifthly, we should consider it our welfare and our merit to be afflicted, tormented, and, as it were, annihilated for the honor of God’s majesty; sixthly, we should be content to carry a crucified heart, a heart suffering and penetrated with bitterness and sorrow, in imitation of our crucified Jesus.

PRAYER

NO, Lord, I will not give up all as lost when Thou seemest to withdraw Thyself from me; but, on the contrary, I will believe all gained when my soul, though sinking under fatigue, and withered with bitterness, shall resign itself to Thy holy will, and live only in Thee, saying with the Prophet: “I commit to Thee all my strength, for my soul is in Thy hands,

and Thy mercy supports and encourages my heart to profit by the sense of my miseries.” Abandon me not, o God, to the disorder of my passions, but be Thou their master by Thy grace, and keep me always in the possession of Thy love. Amen.

CHAPTER 31

OF THE CONTEMPT OF EVERYTHING CREATED, IN ORDER TO FIND THE CREATOR

DISCIPLE. Lord, I stand much in need of a grace yet greater, if I must arrive so far that it may not be in the power of any man nor anything created to hinder me.

For as long as anything holds me back, I cannot freely fly to Thee.

He was desirous to fly freely to Thee who said: “Who will give me wings like a dove, and I will fly and be at rest?”

What can be more at rest than a single eye?

And what can be more free than he who desires nothing upon earth?

A man ought, therefore, to soar above everything created, and perfectly to forsake himself, and in ecstasy of mind to stand and see that Thou, the Creator of all, hast nothing like to Thee among creatures.

And unless a man be disengaged from all things created, he cannot freely attend to things Divine.

And this is the reason why there are found so few contemplative persons, because there are few that know how to sequester themselves entirely from perishable creatures.

2. For this a great grace is required, such as may elevate the soul, and lift her up above herself.

And unless a man be elevated in spirit, and freed from attachment to all creatures, and wholly united to God, whatever he knows, and whatever he has, is of no great importance.

For a long time shall he be little, and lie groveling beneath, who esteems anything great but only the one, immense, eternal good.

And whatsoever is not God is nothing, and ought to be accounted as nothing.

There is a great difference between the wisdom of an illuminated and devout man, and the knowledge of a learned and studious cleric.

Far more noble is that learning which flows from above from the Divine influence, than that which is laboriously acquired by the industry of man.

3. Many are found to desire contemplation, but they are not careful to practice those things which are required for its attainment.

It is also a great impediment, that we rest so much upon signs and sensible things, and have but little of perfect mortification.

I know not what it is, by what spirit we are led, or what we pretend to, who seem to be called spiritual persons, that we take so much pains and are so full of anxiety for transitory and mean things, and seldom if ever think with all recollection of mind on our own inward concerns.

4. Alas, after a slight recollection, we presently break forth again; neither do we weigh well our works by a strict examination.

Where our affections lie, we take no notice; and how impure is our every action, we do not deplore.

Because all flesh had corrupted its way, therefore the great deluge followed.

Since, therefore, our interior affection is much corrupted, it must needs be that the action which follows, which is a testimony of the want of inward vigor, should also be corrupted.

From a pure heart proceedeth the fruit of a good life.

5. How much a man hath done is inquired into; but with how much virtue he hath acted is not so studiously weighed.

We ask whether he be strong, rich, handsome, clever, a good writer, a good singer, or a good workman; but how poor he is in spirit, how patient and meek, how devout and internal, is what few speak of.

Nature looketh upon the exterior of a man; but grace turneth itself to the interior.

Nature is often in error; but grace hath her trust in God, that so she may not be deceived.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

NOTHING is worthy of a Christian's affection but what is eternal; he should never love anything but what he may love forever. Wherefore let us endeavor, in the first place, to prefer the will of God to all other satisfactions; secondly, to seek in all things to please Him; thirdly, to receive, as coming from His hands, with humble submission, whatever He is pleased to send us; fourthly, to recollect ourselves frequently in His presence, and depend upon Him in all things.

Why should we be busied about trifles, with vain reflections about ourselves, and disquietude about others, while God is residing within us, and expecting from us the homage of our hearts, and the dedication of our whole selves to Him?

We know how dangerous it is to neglect the grace of God, and yet we make small account of the losses we sustain by yielding to a spirit of dissipation, paying but little attention to what God requires of us.

PRAYER

O MY God and my all! O amiable and most loving God! how little attention do I pay to Thy presence, how unfaithful am I to Thy grace, and how little courage do I evince for the sacrifice of all satisfaction to Thee! And yet Thou art the God of my heart, and, as I hope, my portion forever. To become worthy of this happiness, I desire to keep my mind constantly fixed on Thee, to sacrifice to Thy love everything which may divert me from Thee, and neither to say nor to do anything but in order to gain Heaven.

Grant, O Lord, that I may avoid whatever is offensive to Thee, and love and practice that only which is well pleasing in Thy sight; and that, frequently recollecting myself in Thee, I may apply my whole self to Thy presence, and do Thy holy will in all things. Amen.

CHAPTER 32

OF SELF-ABNEGATION, AND THE RENUNCIATION OF ALL CUPIDITY

SON, thou canst not possess perfect liberty, unless thou wholly deny thyself.

All self-seekers and self-lovers are bound in fetters; full of desires, full of cares, ever unsettled, and seeking always their own ease, not the things of Jesus Christ; but oftentimes devising and framing that which shall not stand.

For all shall perish that cometh not of God.

Hold fast this short and perfect word: “Forsake all, and thou shalt find all; relinquish desire, and thou shalt find rest.”

Consider this well, and when thou hast put it in practice, thou shalt understand all things.

2. Lord, this is not the work of one day, nor children’s sport; yea, in this short sentence is included all the perfection of religious.

Son, thou oughtest not to be turned back, nor presently cast down, when thou hearest what is the way of the perfect; but be drawn the more onwards towards its lofty heights, or at least aspire ardently for their attainment.

I would it were so with thee, and that thou wert come so far that thou wert no longer a lover of thyself, but didst simply wait My bidding and his whom I have appointed father over thee; then wouldst thou exceedingly please Me, and all thy life would pass in joy and peace.

Thou hast yet many things to forsake, which unless thou give them up to Me without reserve, thou shalt not obtain that for which thou prayest.

I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayst become rich—that is, heavenly wisdom, which treadeth under foot all things below.

Lay aside earthly wisdom—that is, all human and self-complacency.

3. I have said, buy for thyself things most contemptible for such as are precious and most valued in human estimation.

For very mean and contemptible, and almost forgotten amongst men, seems that wisdom which is true and heavenly, not teaching high notions of self, nor seeking to be magnified upon earth; which many praise in words, while in their life they are far from it; yet this same is that precious pearl which is hidden from many.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

WHAT is it to quit all things? It is, first, to renounce and to die to ourselves; secondly, to mortify the senses, the mind, and the heart; thirdly, to detach ourselves from everything that affords us pleasure, and to receive with willingness and submission whatever gives us pain; fourthly, to love our friends in God, our enemies for God, and to hate only ourselves; fifthly, to attach ourselves only to God, to our duties, and to our salvation; sixthly, to direct all the energies of our hearts towards God and against ourselves; seventhly, to desire nothing but to please Him, and to fear nothing but to offend Him; eighthly, to make it our happiness and our merit to gain the light of His countenance, and to become worthy of His love.

How easy to say, I desire to quit all and to belong entirely to God! But how difficult to perform, unless we withdraw ourselves with fixed determination from everything which does not lead us to Him! A small degree of Divine love makes this dedication and sacrifice of ourselves to God possible and easy. We should constantly desire it, and ask for it, and practice it.

PRAYER

SUFFER not my heart, O Lord, which was created to love and to possess Thee, to be attached to creatures or to itself, preferably to Thee. Thou alone canst satisfy it, and make it happy; to Thee, therefore, should it solely and constantly adhere. O my God, I can indeed sin without Thee; but I cannot rise again without Thee, nor withdraw myself from anything that would seduce my mind and corrupt my unsteady heart. Succor, support, and strengthen me in the combats which I am obliged to sustain with myself, in

my endeavors to renounce all, that in all I may seek and find Thee. How it distresses me to behold myself the slave of my passions, and the victim of my wayward humors! Break asunder my chains, O Lord, and grant that, detaching myself from all things else, I may adhere only to Thee. Amen.

CHAPTER 33

OF THE INCONSTANCY OF OUR HEART, AND OF DIRECTING OUR FINAL INTENTION TO GOD

SON, trust not to thy feeling; whatever it may be now it will be quickly changed into another. As long as thou livest thou art subject to change, even against thy will; so as to be sometimes joyful, at other times sad; now at peace, again troubled; at one time devout, at another indevout; sometimes fervent, at other times sluggish; one day heavy, another elated.

But he that is wise and well instructed in spirit stands above all these changes, not minding what he feels in himself, nor on what side the wind of instability bloweth: but that the whole bent of his soul may be made conducive towards the due and wished-for end.

For thus one and the same and unshaken can he stand, directing, through all this variety of events, the single eye of his intention unflinchingly towards Me.

2. And the purer the eye of thine intention is, with so much greater constancy wilt thou pass through these diverse storms.

But in many the eye of pure intention is dark; for men quickly look towards something delightful as it comes in their way; and seldom will you find anyone altogether free from all blemish of self-seeking.

So of old the Jews came into Bethania, to Martha and Mary, not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also.

The eye of the intention must therefore be purified, that it may be single and right; and it must be directed unto Me, beyond all various objects that come between.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

IN order to fix the instability of our hearts in what regards the service of God, and the care of our salvation, we should, first, mistrust, ourselves and confide in God; secondly, we should have recourse to Him and implore His assistance on all occasions; thirdly, we should often renew our intention of pleasing Him, without wishing to please ourselves; fourthly, we should fight without ceasing against our natural repugnances; fifthly, we should desire only what God wills, and endeavor to execute it; sixthly, we should habituate our hearts to love God, and, as it were, contract those holy bonds by which He desires to be united with us forever; and, seventhly, we should punctually attend to the inspirations and motions of His grace.

PRAYER

WHEN shall Thy grace, O God, inspire me with some degree of that firmness and faithful adherence to Thee which Thy glory imparts to the blessed? Suffer not my heart to be overcome by that inconstancy which is so natural to it, nor my life to be a perpetual succession of good desires and evil practices, of promises and infidelities. Not to love Thee at all times is to love Thee not as God; Thy reign over our hearts, to be worthy of Thee, should be constant and invariable.

Grant, then, O God, that my soul may be all Thine, at all times, and forever; and that, by my perpetual fidelity, I may merit eternal happiness. Amen.

CHAPTER 34

THAT HE THAT LOVETH GOD RELISHETH HIM ABOVE ALL THINGS AND IN ALL THINGS

BEHOLD my God and my all! What would I more, and what greater happiness can I desire?

O sweet and savory word! but to him that loveth the Word, not the world nor the things that are in the world.

My God and my all! To one that understandeth sufficient is said; to one that loveth, to repeat it often is delightful.

For when Thou art present, all things yield delight; but when thou art absent, all things grow loathsome.

Thou makest a tranquil heart, great peace, and festive joy.

Thou makest us to think well of all things, and in all things to praise Thee, nor can anything without Thee afford any lasting pleasure; but if it is to be agreeable and well-pleasing to us, Thy grace must be present, and it must be seasoned with the savor of Thy wisdom.

2. To whom Thou impartest a relish, what will not be rightly agreeable to him?

And to him that relisheth Thee not, what can ever yield any true delight?

But the wise of the world and the wise according to the flesh are destitute of Thy wisdom; for in the former is found much vanity and in the latter death.

But they that follow Thee, by the contempt of worldly things and the mortification of the flesh, are found to be wise indeed; for they are translated from vanity to truth, from the flesh to the spirit.

Such as these have a relish of God; and whatever good is found in creatures, they refer it all to the praise of their Maker.

But great, yea, very great, is the difference between the relish of the Creator and the creature, of eternity and of time, of light uncreated and of light enlightened.

3. O Light perpetual! transcending all created lights, dart forth that light from above, which may penetrate all the secret recesses of my heart.

Cleanse, cheer, enlighten, and enliven my spirit with its powers, that with joyful ecstasy it may cleave to Thee.

Oh, when will this blessed and desirable hour come, that Thou mayst fill me with Thy presence, and become to me all in all?

So long as this is not granted, my joy will not be full.

As yet, alas, the old man is living in me; he is not wholly crucified, he is not perfectly dead.

He still lusteth strongly against the spirit, he wagheth war with me, neither suffereth he the kingdom of the soul to be quiet.

4. But Thou, Who rulest over the power of the sea, and assuageth the motion of its waves, arise and help me.

Scatter Thou the nations that delight in wars, crush them in Thy might.

Show forth, I beseech Thee, Thy wonderful works, and let Thy right hand be glorified.

For there is no hope nor refuge for me but in Thee, O Lord my God.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

To love God alone, to love Him above all things, is to delight only in Him, to seek only Him, and to renounce everything which by nature is pleasing to us, according to that word of the royal Prophet: "My soul refused to be comforted: I remembered God, and was delighted, and was exercised, and my spirit swooned away."

Wherefore, if we would love only God, let us mortify the senses, captivate the mind, restrain the heart, subdue the flesh, and refuse ourselves numberless gratifications, in order to please God. Happy the soul that is willing to live a crucified life with Jesus upon the Cross, that so it may be able to say with the Apostle: "Jesus Christ is my life, and it is my gain to die to all, that I may live for Him alone."

PRAYER

HOW sweet, O Lord, to breathe only Thy love, and to say to Thee with my whole heart: “My God and my all! my Lord and my God!” Grant that these words may enter into my soul; do Thou impress them upon my mind and in my heart; grant me to understand and to practice them. O great God, Thou art, and this doth satisfy me, because I love Thee more for Thyself than for my own sake. But O God! Thou art my Savior; all that Thou art in this respect, Thou art for me, and this redoubles my confidence in and love for Thee. O my God! how can I live without Thee? How can I not live for Thee? O my Lord, reign absolutely over me. O my God! May my whole self be Thine, and may I live only for Thee! My Lord and my God! Mayst Thou be so in time, that Thou mayst be my portion for all eternity. Amen.

CHAPTER 35

THAT THERE IS NO BEING SECURE FROM TEMPTATION IN THIS LIFE

SON, thou art never secure in this life; but as long as thou livest spiritual weapons are always necessary for thee.

Thou art in the midst of enemies, and art assaulted on the right hand and on the left.

If, therefore, thou dost not make use of the buckler of patience on every occasion, thou wilt not be long without a wound.

Moreover, if thou dost not set thy heart fixedly on Me, with a sincere will of suffering all things for My sake, thou canst neither sustain the heat of this warfare, nor attain to the palm of the blessed.

It behooveth thee, therefore, to go through all manfully, and to use a strong hand against whatsoever withstandeth thee.

For to him that overcometh is given manna, and to the sluggard is left much misery.

2. If, in this life, thou seekest rest, how then wilt thou come to the eternal rest?

Set not thyself for much rest, but for great patience.

Seek true peace not upon earth, but in Heaven; not in men nor in other creatures, but in God alone.

Thou must be willing, for the love of God, to suffer all things—namely, labors and sorrows, temptations, vexations, anxieties, necessities, infirmities, injuries, detractions, reprehensions, humiliations, confusions, corrections, and contempts.

These help to virtue, these prove the novice of Christ, these things weave a celestial crown.

I will give thee back for this short labor a reward eternal, and for transitory confusion glory that is infinite.

3. Dost thou think always to have spiritual consolations when thou pleasest?

My Saints had not so; but they met with many troubles, and various temptations, and great desolations.

But they patiently supported themselves in all contingencies, and confided more in God than in themselves; knowing that the sufferings of this life are not worthy to merit the glory that is to come.

Wouldst thou have that immediately which others, after many tears and great labors, have hardly obtained?

Expect the Lord, do manfully and be of good heart; do not despond, do not fall off, but offer with constancy both soul and body for the glory of God.

I will reward thee most abundantly; I will be with thee in all thy tribulations.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

“PREPARE thy soul for temptation,” says the Wise Man—that is, first, let not thy happiness consist in being free from sufferings, but in bearing them patiently; secondly, expose not thyself voluntarily to temptation, nor to the occasions of sin, but if thou shouldst be attacked by the one or engaged in the other, resist, fight, fly, and have recourse to God with all confidence; thirdly, watch, pray, humble thyself before God, and be penetrated with a reverential fear in His presence, a holy diffidence in thyself, and a firm confidence in Him Who will support thee against all the attacks of thy spiritual enemies.

A truly Christian soul should dwell upon Calvary, in the wounds of Jesus, and there suffer with patience, fortitude, and fidelity, whatever He is pleased to appoint. For to be true Christians, and to fulfill the duties of our state, we must be ever resolved to suffer and to die for God; since, as St. Cyprian remarks, Christians are the heirs of a crucified Jesus.

PRAYER

THOU knowest, O God, that nothing is so contrary to our natural inclinations as to suffer and to die: but, to accomplish this, Thou canst and wilt assist us. Give us, therefore, courage to conquer our unwillingness to suffer ills and contradictions, and our repugnance to the discharge of our duties; and grant that neither the delight of pleasure, nor the fear of pain, may ever induce us to become wanting in fidelity or submission to Thee. Amen.

CHAPTER 36

AGAINST THE VAIN JUDGMENTS OF MAN

SON, cast thy heart firmly on the Lord, and fear not human judgment, whensoever thy conscience gives testimony of thy piety and innocence.

It is a good and blessed thing to suffer in such a manner; neither will this be grievous to a humble heart, nor to one that confideth in God more than in one's self.

Many say many things, and therefore little credit must be given to them.

Neither is it possible to satisfy all. Though Paul endeavored to please all in the Lord, and became all to all, yet he made little account of being judged by man's day.

2. He labored abundantly for the edification and salvation of others, as much as lay in him and as much as he could; but he could not prevent being sometimes judged and despised by others.

Therefore he committed all to God, Who knoweth all, and defended himself by patience and humility against the tongues of those that spoke unjustly, as well as those who devised vain and lying deceits, and who, according to caprice, made accusation of whatever they wished.

However, he answered them sometimes, lest his silence might give occasion of scandal to the weak.

3. Who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a mortal man? Today he is, and tomorrow he is no more seen.

Fear God, and thou shalt not be afraid of the terrors of man.

What can anyone do against thee by words or injuries?

He rather hurts himself than thee; nor will he be able, whoever he be, to escape the judgment of God.

Have God before thine eyes and do not contend with querulous words.

So that if at present thou seem to be overcome, and to suffer a confusion which thou hast not deserved, do not repine at this, and do not lessen thy crown by impatience, but rather look up to Me in Heaven, Who am powerful to deliver thee from all confusion and injury, and to render to every one according to his works.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

A CHRISTIAN, when assailed by the shafts of calumny, should, in reality, regard these trials from a favorable point of view, because they subject him to the happy necessity of flying to God, and of appealing to Him as the secret witness of his conscience. Although we are fully convinced that, in reality, the esteem or contempt of men, their good or bad opinion respecting us, can neither make us more happy nor more miserable, yet do we strive to obtain their approbation. Why do we not rather endeavor to establish ourselves in the favor of God, Who will decide our eternal doom?

PRAYER

O LORD, Who didst sacrifice Thy life by a cruel and disgraceful death, and didst give Thy Heart to perpetual sorrow and bitterness for my sake, can I refuse to sacrifice to Thee the sensibilities of my heart, when troubled on account of the remarks and disadvantageous judgments of others concerning me? Grant, O Divine Jesus, that at the sight of the outrages Thou didst endure for me, my heart may reproach itself for suffering so little, and that so unwillingly, for Thee. And, since the wounds which are inflicted upon the reputation of our neighbor fall always, either in this life or in the next, upon him who does the injury, for Thy glory, and not for mine, deliver my enemies from their blindness, forgive their malice, and inflame them with the fire of Thy charity. Amen.

CHAPTER 37

OF A PURE AND ENTIRE RESIGNATION OF OURSELVES FOR THE OBTAINING FREEDOM OF HEART

SON, relinquish thyself, and thou shalt find Me.

Stand without choice or any self-seeking, and thou shalt always gain.

For greater grace shall be added to thee as soon as thou hast given up thyself, and dost not take thyself back.

2. Lord, how often shall I resign myself, and in what things shall I relinquish myself?

3. Always and at all times; as in little, so also in great; I make no exception, but will have thee to be found in all things divested of self.

Otherwise, how canst thou be Mine and I thine, unless thou be both interiorly and exteriorly stripped of thine own will?

The sooner thou effectest this, the better will it be with thee; and the more fully and sincerely thou dost it, the more wilt thou please Me, and the more shalt thou gain.

4. Some there are that resign themselves, but it is with some exception; for they do not wholly trust in God, and therefore are busy in providing for themselves.

Some also at first offer all; but afterwards, being assailed by temptation, they return again to what they had left, and therefore make no progress in virtue.

These shall neither attain to the true liberty of a pure heart, nor to the grace of a delightful familiarity with Me, unless they first entirely resign

themselves up, and offer themselves a daily sacrifice to Me: without which, union of fruition neither is nor shall subsist.

5. I have often said to thee, and I repeat it now again: Forsake thyself, resign thyself, and thou shalt enjoy a great inward peace.

Give all for all; seek nothing; call for nothing back; stand purely and with a full confidence before Me, and thou shalt possess Me.

Thou shalt be free in heart, and the darkness shall not weigh thee down.

Aim at this, pray for this, desire this, that thou mayst be divested of all self-seeking; and thus naked, follow Jesus naked, that thou mayst die to thyself, and eternally live to Me.

Then all vain imaginations shall vanish—all evil disturbances and superfluous cares.

Then also immoderate fear shall forsake thee, and inordinate love shall die.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

WHAT is it to quit, to renounce, to abandon ourselves entirely to God, without any reserve? It is, first, to act only from the influence of His grace, and an actual desire to please Him—a desire which should be kept up and oftentimes renewed; secondly, it is to yield to Him on all occasions, and to prefer His pleasure to our own; thirdly, it is to renounce our own will in all things and to follow only the will of God; fourthly, it is to make our pleasure consist in pleasing Him, and to have no other interest than His glory; fifthly, to be docile to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit, and the impressions of His love. But, alas! who is there that lives after this manner? Who is there that thus renounces himself and abandons himself unreservedly to God? We renounce ourselves on some occasions, and on others we adhere to self-love; we quit ourselves for a time, and then again we seek ourselves. “The Spirit of the Lord,” says the royal Prophet, “only passes by certain souls, but does not stay; and when He returns He knoweth His place no more; He finds them given more to themselves than to their God.”

PRAYER

HOW am I wearied, O Lord, with being so much given to myself, and so little devoted to Thee; with seeking myself so often and Thee so seldom! Alas! it is because I am vehemently alive to self, and but very little sensible of Thee. O my God! take Thou place of self within me, and make Thy love reign in place of my self-love. When shall I become free and disengaged from myself, and seek only to love to please Thee? Give me, in this respect, what Thou commandest, and command what Thou pleasest. I desire that from this moment Thou mayst be the God of my heart, that Thou mayst be my portion forever. Amen.

CHAPTER 38

OF THE GOOD GOVERNMENT OF OURSELVES IN OUTWARD THINGS, AND OF HAVING RECOURSE TO GOD IN DANGERS

SON, thou oughtest diligently to aim at this, that in every place, and in every action or external occupation, thou be inwardly free, and master of thyself; and that all things be under thee, and not thou under them.

That thou mayst be lord and ruler of thine actions, and not a slave or mercenary.

But rather a freeman and true Hebrew, transferred to the lot and to the liberty of the sons of God.

Who stand above things present, and contemplate the eternal; who with the left eye regard things passing, and with the right those of Heaven.

Whom things temporal draw not away to adhere to them; but they rather draw these things to subserve well the end for which they were ordained by God, and appointed by that sovereign Artist, Who has left nothing disordered in His whole creation.

2. If, likewise, in all events, thou depend not upon things as they appear outwardly, nor regard with a carnal eye things seen and heard, but if instantly, on every occasion, thou enter, like Moses, into the tabernacle to consult the Lord, thou shalt sometimes hear the Divine answer, and shalt return instructed about many things present and future.

For Moses always had recourse to the tabernacle for the deciding doubts and questions, and fled to the aid of prayer for succor against the dangers and wickedness of men.

So must thou, in like manner, fly to the closet of thy heart, and there most earnestly implore the Divine assistance.

For therefore, as thou readest, were Josue and the children of Israel deceived by the Gabaonites, because they did not first consult the Lord; but, too easily giving credit to pleasant words, were deluded with counterfeit piety.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

EXTERIOR occupations oftentimes withdraw the soul from within, and hinder it from being recollected, and from keeping itself in the presence of God, particularly when we give ourselves wholly to them, and reserve not for God the freedom of our hearts. But when we only lend ourselves to exterior employments, and give ourselves, while performing them, to the accomplishment of the will of God, Who requires them of us, then we do not become dissipated, but in the diversity of our employments we do the one thing, which is to seek to please God. The desire to please God should include every other desire, and constitute our peace and happiness. No exterior actions can distract that soul Which reduces all to unity—that is, which seeks only to please God and finds it all in Him.

PRAYER

I AM well aware, my God, that the peace of the soul in this life is not what it will be in the next; for in eternity we shall enjoy the certainty of pleasing Thee, and of possessing Thy love; but in time, we can be certain of neither. Ah! how hard and painful is this uncertainty to a soul that loves Thee, O God, and loves but Thee alone! If Thou wilt not assure me that I love Thee, grant at least that I may live as though I were sure I did love Thee, that thus Thou mayst have all the satisfaction of my love, and I, all the merit of it. Amen.

CHAPTER 39

THAT A MAN MUST NOT BE TOO ANXIOUS ABOUT HIS AFFAIRS

SON, commit thy cause to Me always; I will dispose of it well in its due season. Await My appointment, and thence thou shalt experience success therefrom.

2. Lord, most willingly do I commit all things to Thee; for but little can my own device avail.

Would that I might not be too much set upon future events, but unhesitatingly offer myself to Thy good pleasure.

3. My son, oftentimes a man vehemently pursues something which he desires; but when he has obtained it, he begins to be of another mind.

For our affections are not enduring with regard to the same object, but we rather drive onwards from one to another.

It is therefore no small matter even in things the most trifling, to relinquish self.

4. Man's true progress consists in denying himself, and the man of self-denial is very much at liberty, and secure likewise.

But the old enemy, opposed to all that is good, ceaseth not from tempting, but day and night plotteth deep snares, if perchance he may precipitate the unwary into the deceitful snare.

Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation, saith the Lord.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

IT is vain to trouble ourselves about the future, and to be discouraged at the sight of our infirmities; all consists in relying entirely upon God; in leaving ourselves in His hands, and in sparing no pains to please Him.

It often happens that God wills or permits our anxiety concerning salvation, to bring us into a state bordering on despair, in order to oblige us to place our whole confidence in Him. For the less we are supported by creatures, the more we are upheld by God Whose will and pleasure it is to assist us when all others abandon us. Let us therefore endeavor to cast all our care upon Jesus, Who will be mindful of us, and let us faithfully correspond with His holy designs.

PRAYER

O MY God! Who art able and willing to assist me, what grounds have I not to place my whole confidence in Thee, to throw myself into the arms of Thy Providence, and wait the effects of Thy bounty? Thou hast care of all: I will therefore give myself up entirely to Thee, live always in Thy presence, and ever guide myself by Thy fear and love. It is this grace I now ask of Thee, the God of my heart, and my portion forever. Grant me to weigh well, and to follow Thine admonition: “Be not solicitous: for your heavenly Father knoweth that you have need of all these things.” Amen.

CHAPTER 40

THAT MAN HATH NO GOOD OF HIMSELF, AND THAT HE CANNOT GLORY IN ANYTHING

LORD, what is man, that Thou art mindful of him; or the son of man, that Thou visitest him? What hath man deserved, that Thou shouldst give him Thy grace?

Lord, what cause have I to complain, if Thou forsake me? or what can I justly allege, if what I petition Thou shalt not grant?

This most assuredly I may truly think and say: “Lord, I am nothing, I can do nothing, I have nothing of myself that is good; but I am in all things defective and ever tend to nothing.”

And unless I am assisted and interiorly instructed by Thee, I become wholly tepid and relaxed.

2. But Thou, O Lord, art always the same, and endurest unto eternity; ever good, just, and holy; doing all things well, justly, and holily, and disposing them in wisdom.

But I, who am more inclined to go back than to go forward, continue not always in one state; for seven different times are changed over me.

Yet it quickly cometh better when it pleaseth Thee, and Thou stretchest out Thy helping hand; for Thou alone without man’s aid canst assist and so strengthen me, that my countenance shall be no more diversely changed; but my heart be converted, and find its rest in Thee alone.

3. Wherefore, did I but know well how to cast from me all human comfort, either for the sake of devotion, or through the necessity by which I am compelled to seek Thee, because there is no man that can comfort me,

then might I deservedly hope in Thy favor, and rejoice in the gift of new consolation.

4. Thanks be to Thee, from Whom all proceedeth, as often as it happeneth well to me.

I, indeed, am but vanity, and nothing in Thy sight, an inconstant and weak man.

Whence, therefore, can I glory, or for what do I desire to be thought highly of?

Forsooth, of my very nothingness; and this is most vain.

Truly vainglory is an evil plague, the greatest vanity; because it draweth away from true glory, and robbeth us of heavenly grace.

For whilst a man taketh complacency in himself, he displeaseth Thee; whilst he panteth after human applause, he is deprived of true virtues.

5. But true glory and holy exultation is to glory in Thee, and not in one's self; to rejoice in Thy Name, not in one's own strength; to find pleasure in no creature, save only for Thy sake.

Let Thy Name be praised, not mine; let Thy work be magnified, not mine; let Thy holy Name be blessed, but let nothing be attributed to me of the praises of men.

Thou art my glory, Thou art the exultation of my heart.

In Thee will I glory and rejoice all the day; but for myself, I will glory in nothing but in my infirmities.

6. Let the Jews seek glory of another; I will seek that which is from God alone.

All human glory, all temporal honor, all worldly grandeur, compared to Thine eternal glory, is but vanity and folly.

O my truth and my mercy! my God! O blessed Trinity! to Thee alone be all praise, honor, power, and glory, for endless ages of ages.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

I AM sensible of my natural corruption, which renders me incapable of all supernatural good, and prone to all evil; but I cast myself on the mercies of a God Who can bring much out of little, as He produced all things out of nothing: since it is not sufficient for me to know my own nothingness, and that I ought to glory in nothing, save only in my infirmities; I should also

(for this is most important) be guided by a humble diffidence in myself, and a firm confidence in God, to Whom nothing is impossible. When I find no consolation in man, then it is I feel, indeed, the happy necessity of having recourse to God, and of depending upon Him: happy that, all being wanting to me without Thee, O Lord, I should find my all in Thee! Well might holy Job thus express himself: “Thine eyes are upon me, and I shall be no more.” For when I think of Thee, my God! I feel within me an ardent desire of pleasing Thee; and everything disappears from before me, when Thou dost present Thyself to my soul.

PRAYER

Do Thou, O God, reign absolutely over my soul, and may all that it contains yield and be immolated to Thee! Grant that, by corresponding with Thy holy grace, I may be enabled to suffer the loss of all human and natural satisfaction, to seek in Thee alone my consolation, and to sacrifice my whole self to Thee. O great God! Who knowest my condition, Who art able and willing to assist me, have compassion on the excess of my miseries! Withdraw me from myself, raise me above all visible things, grant that, quitting and renouncing myself, I may desire and seek only Thee. Amen.

CHAPTER 41

OF THE CONTEMPT OF ALL TEMPORAL HONORS

MY Son, take it not to heart, if thou seest others honored and advanced, and thyself despised and debased.

Lift up thy heart to Me in Heaven, and the contempt of men on earth shall not grieve thee.

2. Lord, we are in blindness, and by vanity are quickly seduced.

If I look well unto myself, never was any injury done me by any creature, and therefore I can have no just complaint against Thee.

But since I have often and grievously sinned against Thee, every creature is deservedly armed against me.

To me, therefore, is justly due confusion and contempt; but to Thee, praise, honor, and glory.

And unless I put myself in this disposition, to be willing to be despised and forsaken by all creatures, and to be esteemed altogether nothing, I can neither be interiorly at peace, and stand firm, nor be spiritually enlightened, nor fully united to Thee.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

THE eye of God being always upon us, should impress us with a profound respect for Him, and the sight of Him in our souls should inspire us with a perfect confidence in Him. God beholds me: when I think of this, how can I offend Him? I behold God: how then can I be discouraged? God exists: that suffices to console the true Christian in all his disappointments; because he loves God more for His infinite perfections than for the favors he receives from Him. But God is my Father: what more can I have to allay all my

uneasiness? And is it not sufficient to reflect that He is goodness itself, to induce me to confide with certainty in Him, and to feel secure of His care and protection? He knows, conducts, and disposes all for my salvation; and where can I be so secure as under the wings of my beloved Savior?

PRAYER

IN Thy loving embraces, O Jesus, I desire to live, in them I wish to die; into the

abyss of Thy mercies I cast all my miseries, there to obtain forgiveness for my sins, though enormous, by sincerely renouncing them. Yes, for Thy Name's sake O Lord,

my Savior and Father, Thou wilt pardon me my sins because they are great and because cause the more enormous they are, the more wilt Thou display the magnitude of Thy mercy in their forgiveness. Be propitious, therefore, to me, a miserable sinner, who desire no longer to remain so; and grant that I may love Thee the more as my fears yield to the reflection that though Thou hast power to destroy me, Thou desirest to save me. Amen.

CHAPTER 42

THAT PEACE IS NOT TO BE PLACED IN MEN

SON, if thou placest thy peace in any person, for thine own gratification, and for the sake of his society, thou shalt be unsettled and entangled.

But if thou hast recourse to the ever-living and abiding Truth, thou wilt not be greatly grieved if a friend forsake thee or die.

In Me the love of thy friend ought to stand; and for Me is he to be loved whoever he be, that appeareth to thee good and much to be loved in this life.

Without Me, friendship can neither profit nor endure; nor is that love true and pure which I do not bind together.

Thou oughtest to be so dead towards persons beloved, as to wish, as far as thou art concerned, to be altogether without any human fellowship. So much the nearer doth man approach to God, as he withdraweth himself the farther from all earthly consolation.

So much the higher also doth he ascend to God, as he descendeth the lower into himself, and becometh the viler in his own estimation.

2. But he that attributeth anything of good to himself, hinders God's grace from coming into him; for the grace of the Holy Spirit ever seeketh a humble heart.

If thou knowest perfectly how to annihilate thyself, and empty thyself of all created love, then would I flow into thee with great grace.

When thou lookest towards creatures, the sight of the Creator is withdrawn from thee.

Learn, for the sake of the Creator, to overcome thyself in all things; and then shalt thou be able to attain Divine knowledge.

How little soever it be, if anything be inordinately loved and regarded, it keepeth thee back from the sovereign good and corrupteth the soul.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

THE more we descend into the abyss of our own nothingness, the more do we become exalted before God. We should therefore, in the first place, be little and humble, dependent upon the Almighty, and abide only in Him; secondly, the more we experience our own weakness and misery, the more earnestly should we apply to the mercy of God; thirdly, the less we find of good in ourselves, the more should we debase ourselves before Him, hoping all things from His bounty; fourthly, we should never suffer our hearts to become attached to anything but God, our duties and salvation, love only that which we shall love forever, and thus commence in time what we may hope to continue throughout eternity. All friendship which is not in God and for God is faulty, because we should love God alone with our whole heart. The heart, therefore, should be kept free and disengaged from all things, that it may belong only to Him Who is the center of our hearts, and Who alone can satisfy our desires.

PRAYER

GRANT, O God, that my heart, which was made for Thee alone, may be ever wholly Thine; that free from all undue affection to creatures, it may refer all to Thee, and seek, Thee alone in all things. Yes, my God, I know, with St. Augustine, that Thou art the center of our hearts, because Thou art their last end and sovereign good, and that they cannot rest until they rest in Thee. Grant me, therefore, what I now ask, a faithful, sovereign, and constant adherence to Thee. Amen.

CHAPTER 43

AGAINST VAIN AND WORLDLY LEARNING

SON, let not the beautiful and subtle sayings of men affect thee; for the kingdom of God consisteth not in speech, but in virtue.

Attend to My words, which inflame hearts and enlighten minds, which excite to compunction and afford manifold consolation.

Never read anything in order that thou mayst appear more learned or more wise.

Study the mortification of thy vices; for this will more avail thee than the knowledge of many difficult questions.

2. When thou shalt have read and shalt know many things, thou must always revert to the one beginning.

I am He Who teacheth men knowledge, and Who giveth a more clear understanding to little ones than can be taught by man.

He to whom I speak will quickly be wise and will profit greatly in spirit.

Woe to them that inquire after many curious things of men, and are little curious of the way to serve Me.

The time will come, when Christ the Master of masters, the Lord of Angels, shall appear to hear the lessons of all men—that is, to examine the conscience of everyone.

And then will He search Jerusalem with lamps, and the hidden things of darkness shall be brought to light, and the argument of tongues shall be silent.

3. I am He that in an instant elevateth the humble mind to comprehend more reasons of the eternal truth than if anyone had studied ten years in the schools.

I teach without noise of words, without confusion of opinions, without ambition of honor, without strife of arguments.

I am He Who teacheth to despise earthly things, to loathe things present, to seek the things eternal, to relish the things eternal, to fly honors, to endure scandals, to repose all hope in Me, to desire nothing out of Me, and above all things ardently to love Me.

4. For a certain person, by loving Me intimately, learned things Divine and spoke wonders.

He profited more by forsaking all things than by studying subtleties.

But to some I speak things common, to others things more particular; to some I sweetly appear in signs and figures, to others in great light I reveal mysteries.

One is the voice of books, but it teacheth not all men alike, because I within am the Teacher of truth, the Searcher of the heart, the Understander of thoughts, the Mover of actions, distributing to everyone as I judge fitting.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

GOD scarcely communicates Himself at all to proud and presumptuous souls who

entertain a vain complacency in themselves; because they rob Him of that glory which belongs to Himself alone. But to the humble He communicates His most enlivening and efficacious graces; because they confide not in themselves, but, from a sense of their own misery and sinfulness, depend solely upon Him Who alone can make them worthy of His love.

What will it avail a Christian to know the duties of religion, unless he practice them? What will it avail him to dispute upon the efficacy and the operations of grace, if he be not faithful in corresponding with it, and in punctually following the inspirations of the Holy Spirit? "Not every one," says Jesus Christ, "that saith to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven: but he that doth the will of My Father, Who is in Heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven." We hear this declaration, and why does it not influence our conduct?

PRAYER

COME, O Holy Spirit! Enlighten the minds of all with Thy sacred light,
and inflame

their hearts with the fire of Thy love. Teach us what we are to believe,
and engage us to practice it. For, alas! what will it avail us to know what is
required of us, in order to be saved, if we do not endeavor to reduce it to
practice?

Suffer not our faith to condemn us at the last day, by bearing witness to
what we ought to have done to gain Heaven, and to our having neglected to
perform it; but grant that both our minds and our hearts by belief and
practice may equally conspire to prepare us to eternal bliss. Amen.

CHAPTER 44

OF NOT DRAWING TO OURSELVES EXTERIOR THINGS

SON, in many things it behooveth thee to be ignorant, and to esteem thyself as dead upon the earth, and as one to whom the whole world is crucified.

Many things also thou must pass by with a deaf ear, and think rather of the things that are for thy peace.

It is more profitable to turn away thine eyes from such things as displease thee, and leave to everyone his own way of thinking, than to be a slave to contentious discourses.

If thou standest well with God, and regardest His judgment, thou wilt more easily bear to be overcome.

2. O Lord, to what are we come? Behold, a temporal loss is bewailed; for a small gain men labor and run: but spiritual detriment is soon forgotten, and hardly ever returns to mind.

That which is of little or no profit taketh up our thoughts, and that which is necessary above all is negligently passed over; for the whole man sinketh down into outward things, and unless he quickly recovereth himself, he willingly continueth immersed into exterior things.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

To regard one's self as crucified and dead to the world is, first, to entertain no attachment for anything but God, one's duty, and salvation; secondly, to regard all things as passing away, and to say to one's self: I am here to day, but shall be gone tomorrow: at the hour of death, what will honor, fortune, or pleasure avail me? Only, in proportion as I have used them as though I used them not.

Happy the Christian who dies thus to the world in affection, before he quits it in reality, who endeavors meritoriously to die daily to some one of those things which he will be forced to relinquish in death! Thus by dying daily, he will best secure for himself a happy departure hence.

We bewail our temporal losses, we incessantly dwell upon them, we are scarcely to be consoled when they happen to us; but when the soul perishes, its loss is soon forgotten, we soon become insensible to it, though this alone should affect a Christian. We cannot suffer the loss of any earthly good without regret, but the loss of Thee, my God, we mourn not, though Thou alone art our sovereign good.

PRAYER

ENLIGHTEN our minds, we beseech Thee, O Lord, and impress our hearts with the greatness of our loss when we withdraw ourselves from Thee. Grant that we may ever prefer Thee before all things else, and choose rather to lose all earthly goods than relinquish but for one moment Thy grace and love. When, O God, shall I resemble the dead within their graves (that which, according to St. Paul, is the spirit, the character, and the duty of all true Christians)? When shall I think no more of the world, and be content for the world to think no more of me? From henceforth, O Jesus, I desire to die to all things else, that I may live only to Thee for time and eternity. Amen.

CHAPTER 45

THAT WE MAY NOT BELIEVE ALL, AND HOW EASILY WE ERR IN SPEECH

GRANT me help, O Lord, in my tribulation, for vain is the aid of man.

How often have I not found faithfulness there where I thought I might depend upon it.

And how often have I there found it where I the less expected it!

Vain therefore is hope in man; but the salvation of the just is in Thee, O God.

Blessed be Thou, O Lord my God, in all things that befall us.

We are weak and unsteadfast; we are easily deceived and changed.

2. Who is the man that is able to keep himself so warily and so circumspectly in all things, as not sometimes to fall into delusion or perplexity?

But he that trusteth in Thee, O Lord, and seeketh Thee with a simple heart, doth not so easily fall.

And should he perchance fall into some tribulation, how entangled soever he be therewith, he will the sooner be rescued or comforted by Thee; for Thou wilt not finally forsake him that trusteth in Thee.

Rare indeed is a faithful friend who will persevere in all the pressing necessities of his friend.

Thou, O Lord, Thou alone art most faithful in all things, and besides Thee, there is no other such.

3. Oh, how wise was that holy soul that said: “My mind is solidly established in and grounded upon Christ!” [Life of St. Agatha]

Were it but so with me, human fear would not so easily give me anxiety, nor the arrows of men’s words move me.

Who is sufficient to foresee all things? Who to provide against future evils?

If things foreseen do yet often hurt us, how can things unlooked for otherwise than grievously wound us? But why have I not better provided for my wretched self?

Why also have I so easily placed confidence in others?

But we are men: and no other indeed than frail men, although by many we are esteemed and called angels.

To whom shall I give credit, O Lord?

Whom shall I believe but Thee? Thou art the Truth, which canst neither deceive nor be deceived.

And again: Every man is a liar, weak, unstable, and subject to fail, especially in words; so that we ought not readily to believe even that which in appearance seemeth to sound well.

4. How wisely didst Thou forewarn us to take heed of men, and that a man's enemies are those of his own household; that we are not to believe: if anyone should say: Behold here, or behold there.

I have been taught to my cost, and I wish it may serve to make me more cautious, and not increase my folly.

Be wary, saith a certain one; be wary, keep to thyself what I tell thee.

And whilst I keep silence, and believe the matter to be secret, he himself cannot keep the secret which he desireth me to keep, but presently betrayeth both me and himself, and goeth his way.

From such foolish speech and such unwary people defend me, O Lord, that I may not fall into their hands, nor ever commit the like.

Give to my mouth truth and constancy in my words, and remove far from me a crafty tongue.

What I am not willing to suffer I ought by all means to shun.

5. Oh, how good and how peaceful is it to be silent about others, and not to believe all that is said, nor easily to report what one has heard; To lay one's self open to few; always to seek Thee, the Beholder of the heart:

And not to be carried about with every wind of words; but to wish that all things, both within and without us, may be accomplished according to the pleasure of Thy will!

How secure is it for the preservation of heavenly grace, to fly the human appearance, not to seek those things that seem to cause admiration abroad,

but with all diligence to follow those things which bring amendment of life and fervor!

To how many hath it been hurtful to have their virtue known, and over hastily praised!

How indeed hath grace profited when kept with silence during this frail life! The whole of which is declared to be a temptation and a warfare.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

WHAT is it to be “strongly settled and grounded upon Christ?” (St. Agatha).

It is, first, to rely only upon Him, and trust but little to the promises of men; secondly, it is to prefer His grace and love before the friendship and consideration of all mankind besides; for there is no true good but in being well with God; thirdly, it is to treat with Him with all the earnestness of our souls, confidently to have recourse to Him in all our necessities, and to oblige our hearts to love Him, that at the moment of death, when we shall appear before Him, He may show Himself to us as a Father of mercy, and as a Savior Whom we have long known and loved, and not as a strange God and terribly just Judge, saying to us; You would not endeavor to know Me and love Me in time; now will I not know you for eternity; you shall not be Mine forever.

PRAYER

GRANT me, O Jesus, to know what Thou art in Thyself, and what Thou art to

me, that my heart may be penetrated with Thy holy fear and love. Shall I be so ungrateful and so unjust as to give my heart to any other but Thee, my God, or to rely on any creature in preference to Thee? Were I to act thus, how justly should I deserve to be miserable both for time and eternity! What, Lord! I suffice for Thee, and shouldst not Thou suffice for me? No, blessed Jesus, it shall not be thus: I desire only Thee and the accomplishment of Thy holy will, as my happiness for time and eternity. Amen.

CHAPTER 46

OF HAVING CONFIDENCE IN GOD, WHEN ARROWS OF WORDS ARE AIMED AGAINST US

SON, stand firm, and trust in Me; for what are words, but words?

They fly through the air, but hurt not a stone.

If thou art guilty, think that thou wilt willingly amend thyself; if thou art not conscious to thyself of anything, think that thou wilt willingly suffer this for God's sake.

It is a small matter that thou shouldst sometimes bear with words, who art not able as yet to endure hard blows.

And why do such trifles go to thy heart, but because thou art yet carnal, and regardest men more than thou oughtest?

For because thou art afraid of being despised, thou art not willing to be reprehended for thy faults, and seekest shelter in excuses.

2. But look better into thyself, and thou shalt find that the world is still within thee, and a vain fondness for pleasing men.

For since thou refusest to be abased and confounded for thy defects, it is plain indeed thou art neither truly humble, nor dead to the world, nor the world crucified to thee.

But give ear to My word, and thou shalt not value ten thousand words of men.

Behold if all were said against thee which with the utmost malice could possibly be invented, what hurt could they do thee, if thou wouldst let them all pass, and value them no more than a straw?

Could they even so much as pluck one hair from thee?

3. But he who keepeth not his heart interiorly, nor God before his eyes, is easily moved with a word of dispraise.

Whereas he that trusteth in Me, and desireth not to stand by his own judgment, will be void of human fear.

For I am the Judge and Discerner of all secrets; I know how the matter passeth; I know both him that inflicteth the injury and him that suffereth it.

From Me went forth this word, by My permission it happened, that the thoughts out of many hearts might be revealed.

I will judge the guilty and the innocent; but by a secret judgment I would try them both beforehand.

4. The testimony of men oftentimes deceiveth; My judgment is true; it shall stand and not be overthrown.

It is for the most part hidden, and to few laid open in everything; yet it never erreth, nor can it err: though to the eyes of the unwise it may seem not right.

To Me, therefore, must thou run in every decision, and not depend upon thine own judgment.

For the just man will not be troubled, whatever happeneth to him from God.

And should even some unjust charge be preferred against him, he will not much care; yet neither will he vainly rejoice, if he be reasonably acquitted by others.

For he considereth that I am He Who searcheth the heart and the reins; Who judgeth not according to the face, nor according to human appearance.

For oftentimes that is found blameworthy in My eyes which in the judgment of men is esteemed commendable.

5. O Lord God, the just Judge, strong and patient, Who knowest the frailty and depravity of men, be Thou my strength and my entire confidence, for my own conscience sufficeth me not.

Thou knowest that which I know not; and therefore under every reprehension I ought to humble myself, and bear it with meekness.

Pardon me, therefore, propitiously, as often as I have not done thus; and give me in future the grace of greater long-suffering.

For better to me is Thine abundant mercy for the obtaining of pardon, than my own imaginary justice for the defending of my hidden conscience.

And although I am not conscious to myself of anything, yet I cannot hereby justify myself: for Thy mercy apart, no man living shall in Thy sight be justified.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

IT is difficult not to be troubled when we are blamed, reprimanded, or contemned.

But true Christian humility consists in not entertaining nor expressing the resentment we at first experience; that is, it consists, first, in not indulging ill-natured and contemptuous reflections upon those who despise us; secondly, in stifling the mortification they occasion us, and in offering it as a sacrifice to God; thirdly, in behaving kindly towards them, speaking to them and rendering them services as occasion may occur, and in doing them as much good as we think they have done us harm. But, alas, how few practice this true humility, and make good use of contradictions and contempt, although all believe that without true humility it is impossible to be saved!

PRAYER

HOW little, O God, is a true Christian affected, one who fears and loves Thee

above all things; how little is he affected by the judgments of men, and how much concerned as to the judgment Thou wilt one day pass upon him! When present before Thee, in the Most Holy Sacrament, I will ask: How do I stand with Thee? What am I in Thy sight? What will be my eternal lot? With such thoughts let me die to the desire of the esteem and to the fear of the contempt of men, that I may seek only to find favor with Thee. Amen.

CHAPTER 47

THAT ALL GRIEVOUS THINGS ARE TO BE ENDURED FOR LIFE EVERLASTING

SON, let not the labors which thou hast undertaken for My sake crush thee, neither let tribulations, from whatever source, cast thee down; but in every occurrence let My promise strengthen and console thee.

I am sufficient to recompense thee beyond all bounds and measure.

It is not long thou hast to labor here, nor shalt thou be always oppressed with sorrows.

Wait a little, and thou shalt see a speedy end of suffering.

The hour cometh when all labor and trouble shall be no more.

All is little and short which passeth away with time.

2. Mind what thou art about: labor faithfully in My vineyard: I will be thy reward.

Write, read, sing, lament, keep silence, pray, bear adversities manfully: eternal life is worth all these, and greater combats.

Peace shall come on one day, which is known to the Lord.

And it will not be day or night, such as it is at present; but light everlasting, infinite brightness, steadfast peace and safe repose.

Thou shalt not then say: Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

Neither shalt thou cry out: Woe is me that my sojourning is prolonged; for death shall be no more, but never-failing health; no anxiety, but blessed delight, and a society sweet and glorious.

3. Oh! if thou couldst see the everlasting crowns of the Saints in Heaven, and in how great glory they now triumph, who appeared contemptible heretofore to this world, and as it were even unworthy of life, doubtless

thou wouldst immediately cast thyself down to the very earth, and wouldst rather be ambitious to be in subjection to all, than to have precedence over so much as one.

Neither wouldst thou covet the pleasant days of this life, but wouldst rather be glad to suffer tribulation for God's sake; and esteem it the greatest gain to be reputed as nothing amongst men.

4. Oh, if thou didst but relish these things, did they penetrate deep into thy heart, how wouldst thou dare so much as once to complain! Ought not all painful labors to be endured for everlasting life?

It is no small matter to lose or gain the kingdom of God.

Lift up, therefore, thy face to Heaven; behold I and all My Saints with Me, who in this world have had a great conflict, now rejoice, are comforted now, are now secure, are now at rest; and they shall for all eternity abide with Me in the kingdom of My Father.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

How hard is this saying: That salvation is only to be obtained by a life of continual suffering, by constantly fighting against and by ever renouncing and dying to ourselves! But how are we encouraged to submit to such a course, by the hope and assurance of eternal happiness, which will be the reward we shall receive in exchange for the disappointments and miseries of this present time! Nothing will afford us such great consolation at the hour of death, as the good use we have made of sufferings; then shall we find that we have done nothing purely for God, but what we have done contrary to ourselves, and that a truly Christian life must necessarily be a life of crosses and self-denials.

PRAYER

AS, O God, we believe and hope for the good things of eternity, grant that we

may so use the transitory miseries of this life as to obtain the permanent felicity of the next. At the hour of death what shall we not wish to have done, to have suffered, and renounced for the sake of obtaining Heaven! Instill, O Lord, into our hearts something of the desires we shall then entertain to no purpose, that we may now really renounce and die to

ourselves. Grant we may never consider anything as great but what is eternal, and regard all that passes away with time, as little and contemptible. O happiness! O joy! O eternal felicity! console us under the afflictions of our mortal course. And since we must of necessity repent either in time or for all eternity, suffer either in this life or in the next, grant us, we beseech Thee, O Jesus, patiently to endure all present evils, in hopes of obtaining future bliss and happiness. Amen.

CHAPTER 48

OF THE DAY OF ETERNITY, AND OF THE DISTRESSES OF THIS LIFE

AH, most happy mansion of the supernal city!

Oh, most bright day of eternity! Which no night ever obscureth, but which the sovereign truth always enlighteneth.

A day always joyful, always secure, and never changing its state for the contrary.

Oh, that this day would shine forth, and that all these temporal things would come to an end!

It shineth, indeed, upon the Saints, resplendent with everlasting brightness; but to us pilgrims upon earth it is seen only as afar off and through a glass.

2. The citizens of Heaven know how joyful that day is; but we poor exiled children of Eve mourn that this our day is bitter and tedious.

The days of this life are short and evil, full of grief and distresses; where man is defiled with many sins, ensnared by many passions, enslaved with many fears, harassed with many snares, distracted with many curiosities, entangled with many vanities, encompassed with many errors, worn with many labors, troubled with temptation, enervated with pleasure, tormented with want.

3. Oh, when will there be an end of these evils?

When shall I be set at liberty from the wretched slavery of vice?

When, O Lord, shall I think of Thee alone?

When shall I fully rejoice in Thee? When shall I be without any impediment in true liberty, without any grievance of mind and body?

When shall there be solid peace, peace firm and undisturbed, peace within and without, peace on every side secure?

O good Jesus! when shall I stand to behold Thee?

When shall I contemplate the glory of Thy kingdom? When wilt Thou be all in all to me?

Oh, when shall I be with Thee in Thy kingdom, which Thou hast prepared for Thy beloved from all eternity?

I am left poor and exiled in an enemy's country, where there are daily wars and grievous misfortunes.

4. Solace my banishment, assuage my sorrow, for my every desire aspireth unto Thee; for whatever this world offereth for my comfort is all burdensome to me.

I long to enjoy Thee intimately, but cannot attain unto it.

I desire to cleave to heavenly things, but temporal things and my unmortified passions weigh me down.

With my mind I wish to be above all things, but by the flesh I am forced against my will to be subject to them.

Thus, unhappy man that I am, I fight with myself, and am become burdensome to myself, whilst the spirit tendeth upwards, and the flesh downwards.

5. Oh! what do I suffer interiorly, whilst with my mind I consider heavenly things; and presently a crowd of carnal thoughts interrupt me as I pray.

O my God, remove not Thyself far from me, and depart not in anger from Thy servant.

Dart forth Thy lightning, and disperse them: shoot Thine arrows, and let all the phantoms of the enemy be put to flight.

Recollect my senses in Thee; make me forget all worldly things; grant me speedily to cast away and to despise all phantoms and vice.

Come to my aid, O eternal truth, that no vanity may move me.

Come, heavenly sweetness, and let all impurity fly from before Thy face.

Pardon me also, and mercifully forgive me, as often as in my prayer I think of aught else beside Thee.

For I truly confess that I am accustomed to be very much distracted.

For many a time I am not there where I am bodily standing or sitting, but am there rather where my thoughts carry me.

There am I where my thought is: and there oftentimes are my thoughts where that which I love is.

That thing most readily cometh to my mind which naturally delighteth me, or which through custom is pleasing to me.

6. Whence Thou, the eternal truth, hast plainly said: Where thy treasure is, there also is thy heart.

If I love Heaven, I love to think on heavenly things.

If I love the world, I rejoice at the world's prosperity, and am troubled at its adversity.

If I love the flesh, my imagination is often on the things of the flesh.

If I love the spirit, I delight to think of spiritual things.

For whatsoever things I love, of the same I love to speak and hear, and I carry home with me the imaginative impressions of such.

But blessed is that man who for Thee, O Lord, abandoneth all things created; who offereth violence to nature, and through fervor of spirit crucifieth the concupiscence of the flesh; that so, with a serene conscience, he may offer to Thee pure prayer, and become worthy to be admitted among the choir of Angels, having excluded himself both exteriorly and interiorly from all the things of earth.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

WHAT will it avail us to suffer and to deplore the miseries of this life, and to sigh after the good things of the next, if we do not endeavor to receive our present tribulations with patience, as coming from the hand of God, and with humility, as corresponding with our deserts; if we strive not to obtain that eternal happiness, after which we sigh, by constant fidelity? O happy day! O eternal joy! O infinite, unchangeable happiness! O establishment! O mansion! O plenitude of God in us and of us in God! O transformation of a blessed soul into its God and its all! When shall I possess thee? But when shall I deserve thee? Weary of myself and of the inefficacy of my desires, I ardently long for thee, O Paradise! and yet how little do I do to obtain thine eternal happiness! Let us join, my soul, let us add to the esteem we have of Paradise our exertions to obtain it. Let us regard it as a crown which can only be obtained by offering a holy violence to ourselves, and as a recompense to be earned only by a supernatural life.

PRAYER

WHEN, O God, shall I withdraw my heart from all things, visible and terrestrial,

and give my whole self to Thee, my sovereign and invisible good? When shalt Thou alone become my consolation and the only happiness of my soul? When shall I see in Thee, my Savior, what I now believe? When shall I possess what I love? When shall I find what I seek? Comfort me in this exile, support me in my sufferings, strengthen me in my weakness. Come, O Jesus, come into my soul by Thy grace, Thy presence and Thy love. Take possession of my heart, that it may never more be separated from Thee. I languish, I sigh, and burn with the desire of beholding Thee face to face in Thy glory. O when shall faith be lost in vision, and hope swallowed up in fruition?

How burdensome is this life to a soul that loves only Thee, my Savior! and how cruel a martyrdom to support it! No, Lord, I can no longer live without loving Thee, nor love Thee as I desire, without seeing Thee! Terminate, therefore, my anguish, by closing my life. Speak, my soul, speak to thy God; but rather, O God, do Thou speak to my heart, that it may die to itself, and live only to Thee. Amen.

CHAPTER 49

OF THE DESIRE OF ETERNAL LIFE, AND HOW GREAT ARE THE BENEFITS PROMISED TO THEM THAT FIGHT

SON, when thou perceivest the desire of eternal bliss to be infused into thee from above, and thou wouldst fain go out of the tabernacle of this body, that thou mightest contemplate My brightness without any shadow of change; enlarge thy heart, and receive this holy inspiration with thy whole desire.

Return the greatest thanks to the supreme goodness, which dealeth so condescendingly with thee, mercifully visiteth thee, ardently inciteth thee, and powerfully raiseth thee up, lest by thine own weight thou fall down to the things of earth.

For it is not by thine own thoughtfulness or endeavor that thou receivest this, but by the mere condescension of heavenly grace and Divine regard; that so thou mayst advance in virtues and greater humility, and prepare thyself for future conflicts, and labor with the whole affection of thy heart to keep close to Me, and serve Me with a fervent will.

2. Son, the fire often burneth, but the flame ascendeth not without smoke.

And so the desires of some are on fire after heavenly things, and yet they are not free from the temptation of carnal affection.

Therefore, it is not altogether purely for God's honor that they act, when they so earnestly petition Him.

Such, also, is oftentimes thy desire, which thou hast professed to be so importunate.

For that is not pure and perfect which is alloyed with self-interest.

3. Ask not that which is pleasant and convenient, but that which is acceptable to Me and for My honor; for if thou judgest rightly, thou oughtest to prefer and to follow My appointment rather than thine own desire or any other desirable thing.

I know thy desire, and I have often heard thy groanings.

Thou wouldst wish to be already in the liberty of the glory of the children of God.

Now doth the eternal dwelling, and the heavenly country full of festivity, delight thee.

But that hour is not yet come; for there is yet another time, a time of war, a time of labor and of probation.

Thou desirest to be filled with the sovereign good, but thou canst not at present attain to it.

I am He: wait for Me, saith the Lord, until the kingdom of God come.

4. Thou hast yet to be tried upon earth and exercised in many things.

Consolation shall sometimes be given thee, but abundant satiety shall not be granted thee.

Take courage, therefore, and be valiant, as well in doing as in suffering things repugnant to nature.

Thou must put on the new man, and be changed into another person.

That which thou wouldst not, thou must oftentimes do; and that which thou wouldst, thou must leave undone.

What pleaseth others shall prosper, what is pleasing to thee shall not succeed.

What others say shall be hearkened to; what thou sayest shall be reckoned as nought.

Others shall ask, and shall receive; thou shalt ask, and not obtain.

5. Others shall be great in the esteem of men; about thee nothing shall be said.

To others this or that shall be committed; but thou shalt be accounted as of no use.

At this nature will sometimes repine, and it will be a great matter if thou bear it with silence.

In these, and many such-like things, the faithful servant of the Lord is wont to be tried how far he can deny and break himself in all things.

There is scarce anything in which thou standest so much in need of dying to thyself as in seeing and suffering things that are contrary to thy will, and more especially when those things are commanded which seem to thee inconvenient and of little use.

And because, being under authority, thou darest not resist the higher power, therefore it seemeth to thee hard to walk at the beck of another, and wholly to give up thine own opinion.

6. But consider, son, the fruit of these labors, their speedy termination, and their reward exceeding great; and thou wilt not hence derive affliction, but the most strengthening consolation in thy suffering.

For in regard to that little of thy will which thou now willingly forsakest, thou shalt forever have thy will in Heaven.

For there thou shalt find all that thou willest, all that thou canst desire.

There shall be to thee the possession of every good, without fear of losing it.

There thy will, always one with Me, shall not covet any extraneous or private thing.

There no one shall resist thee, no one complain of thee, no one obstruct thee, nothing shall stand in thy way; but every desirable good shall be present at the same moment, shall replenish all thine affections, and satiate them to the full.

There I will give thee glory for the contumely thou hast suffered; a garment of praise for thy sorrow; and for having been seated here in the lowest place, the throne of My kingdom forever.

There will the fruit of obedience appear, there will the labor of penance rejoice, and humble subjection shall be gloriously crowned.

7. Now, therefore, bow thyself down humbly under the hands of all, and heed not who it was that said or commanded this.

But let it be thy great care, that whether thy superior, or inferior, or equal, require anything of thee, or hint at anything, thou take all in good part, and labor with a sincere will to perform it.

Let one seek this, another that; let this man glory in this thing, another in that, and be praised a thousand thousand times; but thou, for thy part, rejoice neither in this nor in that, but in the contempt of thyself, and in My good pleasure and honor alone.

This is what thou hast to wish for; That, whether in life or in death, God may be always glorified in thee.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

WE are unwilling to suffer the trials which God sends us, and would receive

nothing from Him but continual consolations; these, however, are only given to support us under dryness and desolation of spirit; He imparts them to us to enable us to support His apparent rigor, which in reality is His goodness towards us, by which He spares not in time, that He may be merciful to us for eternity. Think not, therefore, that thou art rejected by God when thou dost experience nothing but disgust in His service; but do faithfully whatever thou wouldst then do to please Him, if thou didst experience the greatest delight in serving Him, and it shall be well with thee. Humble thyself on such occasions, think thyself unworthy of the least consolation or support. The Lord is pleased that thou shouldst serve Him without any sensible comfort, and by this means conquer thy repugnance to good, and thine inclination for evil, through a pure desire of pleasing Him, and a real dread of offending Him. Ah I how abundantly will a happy eternity repay thee for the sufferings and fatigues of this life, if thou wilt but bear them now with confidence, fidelity, and patience. Take courage, then, my soul, a moment's suffering is eternal joy.

PRAYER

GRANT, O Lord, that my whole delight may be to please Thee, and to do and to

suffer whatever Thou willest. No, my God, I ask no other consolation than the happiness of being faithful to Thee, because I desire to love Thee more for Thyself than on my own account. May Thy love, O God, triumph over all the pursuits and repugnances of self-love! Mayest Thou be all to me in time, that Thou mayest be my all for eternity. Amen.

CHAPTER 50

HOW A DESOLATE PERSON OUGHT TO OFFER HIMSELF INTO THE HANDS OF GOD

O LORD God, holy Father, be Thou now and forever blessed; for as Thou wilt, so is it done, and what Thou dost is always good.

Let Thy servant rejoice in Thee, not in himself nor in any other: for Thou alone art true joy. Thou art my hope and my crown, Thou art my joy and my honor, O Lord.

What hath Thy servant but what he hath received from Thee, even without any merit on his part?

All things are Thine, both what Thou hast given and what Thou hast made.

I am poor, and in labors from my youth, and my soul is saddened sometimes even unto tears, and sometimes, too, my spirit is disturbed within herself by reason of impending suffering.

2. I desire the joy of peace; I beg earnestly for the peace of Thy children who are fed by Thee in the light of consolation.

If Thou give peace, if Thou infuse holy joy, the soul of Thy servant shall be full of melody, and devout in Thy praise.

But if Thou withdraw Thyself, as Thou art very often accustomed to do, he will not be able to run in the way of Thy Commandments, but must rather bow down his knees, and strike his breast; because it is not with him as yesterday and the day before, when Thy lamp shone over his head, and he was protected under the shadow of Thy wings from assaulting temptations.

3. O just Father, holy, and ever to be praised, the hour is come for Thy servant to be tried.

O Father worthy of all love, it is fitting that Thy servant should at this hour suffer something for Thee.

O Father always to be honored, the hour is come which from all eternity Thou didst foresee would arrive; that Thy servant for a short time should be oppressed exteriorly, but interiorly should ever live unto Thee; that he should be for a little slighted and humbled, and should fail in the sight of men.

That he should be severely afflicted with sufferings and languor, that so he may rise again with Thee in the dawning of a new light, and be glorified in Heaven.

O holy Father, Thou hast so appointed, and such is Thy will; and that has come to pass which Thou hast ordained.

4. For this is a favor to Thy friend, that he should suffer and be afflicted in this world for the love of Thee, how often soever, by whomsoever, and in what manner soever, Thou permittest it to befall him.

Without Thy design and providence, and without cause, nothing happeneth in the world.

It is good for me, O Lord, that Thou hast humbled me, that I may learn Thy justifications, and that I may cast away all pride of heart and presumption.

It is profitable for me that shame hath covered my face, that I may rather seek my comfort from Thee than from men.

I have also hereby learned to fear Thine inscrutable judgment; who afflictest the just with the impious, but not without equity and justice.

5. I return Thee thanks that Thou hast not spared my evil ways, but hast bruised me with bitter stripes, inflicting anguish, and sending distress both within and without.

Of all things under Heaven, there is none that can comfort me but Thou, O Lord my God, the heavenly Physician of souls, Who woundest and healest, bringest down to Hell and leadest back again.

Thy discipline is upon me, and Thy rod itself shall instruct me.

6. Behold, O beloved Father, I am in Thy hands; I bow myself down under the rod of Thy correction. Strike Thou my back and my neck, that I may bind my perversity to Thy

will.

Make me a pious and humble disciple, as Thou in Thy goodness art wont to do, that I may walk according to every indication of Thy will.

Myself and all that are mine I commit to Thee for Thy correction; it is better to be chastised here than hereafter.

Thou knowest all and everything and nothing in man's conscience lieth hidden from Thee.

Coming events Thou knowest before they happen; and Thou hast no need to be taught or admonished by anyone of what is being done on earth.

Thou knowest what is expedient for my progress, and how much tribulation serveth to cleanse away the rust of sin.

Do with me according to Thy desired good pleasure; and despise not my sinful life, to no one better or more clearly known than to Thyself alone.

7. Grant me, O Lord, to know what I ought to know; to love what I ought to love; to praise that which is most pleasing to Thee; to esteem that which appeareth to Thee valuable; to abhor that which is filthy in Thy sight.

Suffer me not to judge according to the sight of the outward eyes, nor to give sentence according to the hearing of the ears of ignorant men; but to determine upon matters both visible and spiritual with true judgment and, above all things, ever to seek Thy good will and pleasure.

8. The senses of men are often deceived in giving judgments; and the lovers of this world are deceived in loving only visible things.

How is a man a whit the better for being reputed greater by man?

The deceitful deceiveth the deceitful, the vain deceiveth the vain, the blind the blind, the weak the weak, as often as he extolleth him; and, in truth, doth rather confound him, whilst he vainly praiseth him.

For how much soever each one is in Thine eyes, so much is he and no more, saith the humble St. Francis.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

As God is the sovereign purity and the essence of sanctity, so He is pleased to purify our souls by the most painful and humiliating sufferings in this life, or by torments the most acute and piercing in Purgatory, to fit them for the possession of Himself in the kingdom of Heaven. By these means He brings them to that degree of purity which is necessary to qualify them for

the eternal and happy possession of His sanctity. Hence, that which constitutes the confirmity of a faithful soul, with the designs of God for its sanctification and salvation is, first, to live in such purity of heart as to avoid all willful sin, all human attachments, and, above all, the pursuits of self-love, habitual faults, and self-will; secondly, it is to be ready to receive, from Jesus Christ, trials the most humiliating, and most contrary to its own inclinations; thirdly, it is to support and to fight without ceasing, against the most violent and importunate temptations, by having perpetual recourse to God, with a firm confidence in His goodness; fourthly, in all sufferings, it is to keep up a continual spirit of compunction, mortification, and of a horror for sin, which will preserve us from falling into it; fifthly, it is to be most diligent in keeping a guard over the senses and the heart, that no sensual or merely human satisfaction may enter in; sixthly, it is to be humble, dependent, little and nothing before God, to desire nothing but His will, and to rejoice in its accomplishments, even under the pressure of the heaviest calamities.

PRAYER

ALTHOUGH I am convinced, O God, of the necessity of being humble, faithful, and resigned in affliction, yet to excuse my impatience, how often do I pretend that it is the result of a religious fear and anxiety, lest these trials should end in sin, instead of victory. But dost Thou not know better than I do, O Father of mercies, and God of all consolation? Dost Thou not see this danger? And is this not sufficient to induce Thee, the best of fathers, to assist me? Alas! O Lord, abandon me not, and deliver me not to the desires of my corrupt heart. Remember, O Jesus, how much I have cost Thee, and suffer not Thy torments and death to plead for me in vain. I ardently desire that peace which Thou givest to Thy children, and I find nothing within me but trouble and agitation. Why am I so averse to good, and so much inclined to evil? Why is my soul so frequently bewildered amidst the irregular demands of my passions, and carried by its first impulse towards everything that is contrary to Thy holy will? I mourn over the corruption of my heart. and from Thee alone do I hope for deliverance. It is just I should suffer, on account of my sins; but it is not just I should sin in my sufferings. May I never offend Thee and ruin myself by impatience

under afflictions, but, O God, grant that by them I may sanctify my soul and secure my salvation. Amen.

CHAPTER 51

THAT WE MUST EXERCISE OURSELVES IN HUMBLE WORKS WHEN WE CANNOT ATTAIN TO THE HIGHEST

SON, thou canst not always continue in the more fervent desire of virtue, nor remain constantly in the higher degree of contemplation; but it must needs be that thou sometimes, by reason of original corruption, descend to low things, and bear the burden of this corruptible life, even against thy will and with weariness.

As long as thou carriest about with thee thy mortal body, thou shalt feel weariness and heaviness of heart.

Thou oughtest, therefore, while in the flesh, oftentimes to bewail the burden of the flesh, for that thou canst not unceasingly give thyself up to spiritual exercises and Divine contemplation.

2. On such occasions it is expedient for thee to betake thyself to humble and exterior works, and recreate thyself in good actions; to await My coming and heavenly visitation with an assured hope; to bear with patience thy banishment and the aridity of thy mind, until thou be again visited by Me and freed from all anxieties.

For I will cause thee to forget thy pains, and to enjoy internal quiet.

I will spread open before thee the pleasant fields of the Scriptures, that thy heart being enlarged, thou mayst begin to run in the way of My Commandments.

And then shalt thou say: The sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the future glory, which shall be revealed in us.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

How great is the difference between the sanctity of the blessed in Heaven, and of men upon earth! The one is exempt from pain and full of sweetness, the other is replete with bitterness and misery; the one belongs to that delightful abode, our true country, the other is our portion in this vale of tears.

In eternity, we shall love God in possessing Him and enjoying His felicity; in time, we must love Him by suffering for His sake and patiently carrying the cross of Jesus Christ.

There, we shall be happy in God, and secure of His love forever; here, we know not whether We be worthy of love or hatred. In the time of spiritual dryness and desolation, let us employ ourselves in doing something exteriorly for God, since we find nothing within that sensibly calls us to Him; but at the same time let us not neglect any of the interior exercises of prayer, recollection, and continual recourse to God for His support and assistance.

PRAYER

O MY God I how long shall my sorrowful and rigorous exile keep me at a distance from Thee, uncertain as to my eternal happiness, and even in danger of losing it? How ashamed am I of appearing in Thy presence, miserable, weak, and defiled with sin! Turn not, O Lord, Thy face away from me; for there is no consolation but in Thy presence. Recall me, O God, recall me to Thyself by interior recollection; and may it supply the want of Thy glorious presence, and console me when I think of Thee, and of the misery of not being able to see and to possess Thee. Amen.

CHAPTER 52

THAT A MAN OUGHT NOT TO ESTEEM HIMSELF WORTHY OF CONSOLATION, BUT RATHER DESERVING OF CHASTISEMENT

LORD, I am not worthy of Thy consolation, nor of any spiritual visitation; and, therefore, justly dost Thou deal with me, when Thou leavest me poor and desolate.

For could I shed tears like a sea, yet should I not be worthy of Thy consolation.

Wherefore I deserve nothing else but to be scourged and punished, because I have grievously and often offended Thee, and in many things have very much sinned against Thee.

So that, according to just reason, I do not deserve the least consolation.

But Thou, O gracious and merciful God, Who willest not that Thy works perish, to show the riches of Thy goodness towards the vessels of mercy, vouchsafest beyond all desert to comfort Thy servant above human measure.

For Thy consolations are not like the discourses of men.

2. What have I done, O Lord, thai Thou shouldst impart to me any heavenly consolation?

I can remember nothing of good that I have ever done, that I was always prone to vice, and very slow towards amendment.

It is true, and I cannot deny it; if I should say otherwise, Thou wouldst stand against me, and there would be none to defend me.

What have I deserved for my sins but Hell and everlasting fire?

In truth I confess that I am worthy of all scorn and contempt; neither is it fitting that I should remain among Thy devout ones.

And although I hear this unwillingly, yet, for truth's sake, I will, against myself, condemn my sins, that so I may the easier deserve to obtain Thy mercy.

3. What shall I say, guilty as I am, and full of all confusion?

My mouth can utter nothing but only this one word: I have sinned, O Lord, I have sinned; have mercy on me and pardon me.

Suffer me a little that I may mourn out my grief, before I go to the darksome land that is covered with the dismal shade of death.

What dost Thou especially require of a guilty and wretched sinner, but that he should be contrite and humble himself for his sins?

In true contrition and humility of heart is brought forth hope of forgiveness; the troubled conscience is reconciled; lost grace is recovered; man is secured from the wrath to come; and God and the penitent soul meet together with a holy kiss.

4. Humble contrition for sins is an acceptable sacrifice to Thee, O Lord, of far sweeter odor in Thy sight than the burning of frankincense.

This is also that pleasing ointment which Thou wouldst have to be poured upon Thy sacred feet: for Thou never hast despised a contrite and humble heart.

Here is a place of refuge from the face of the wrath of the enemy.

Here is amended and washed away whatever of defilement has been elsewhere contracted.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

ALTHOUGH we should consider ourselves in all our sufferings as most unworthy of receiving consolation from God, and as deserving of the heaviest chastisements, having so often merited Hell, it is good, nevertheless, to bewail our exile, and to sigh, in the sense of our miseries, for the Father of mercy, and the God of all consolation; for a cry of lamentation from a soul penetrated with gratitude to God for His goodness, and with a deep sorrow for having offended Him, is capable of disarming His anger, and of inclining Him to mercy and pardon.

How is a soul, when loaded with the weight of its iniquities, consoled by the certainty of meeting with mercy from God, when it returns to Him with sincere sorrow for sin, and a firm and effectual resolution of renouncing it, and leading a better life for the future! Then God, Who is more desirous to pardon us than we are to crave His mercy, ceases to be our Judge and becomes our Father. Forgetting what we were, He remembers only what we now are, and treats us with as much bounty as though we had never offended Him.

PRAYER

GIVE me, O God, that sincere sorrow and contrition which may purge away all my offenses. I can commit sin of myself, but I cannot repent nor free myself from it without Thy grace and assistance. Yes, Father, I have sinned, and have offended Thy goodness; and this fills me with grief and confusion. Chastise me, but forgive me, and let my punishment be to hate myself that I may love Thee. I have sinned against Heaven and before Thee; I am not worthy to be numbered amongst Thy children; receive me as one of Thy servants. Then, happy shall I be, if, feeding upon the bread of tears, living in labor, in a reverential fear of Thee, and in an exact obedience to Thy will, I pass my life in mourning and sighing, in punishing myself and avenging Thee, endeavoring never to pardon in myself what Thou art so willing to forgive me! Take away my life from me, O my Savior, or keep me from sin, for I can no longer live to offend Thee. Grant that I may frequently recollect this my desire, and that the remembrance of it may ever withhold me from displeasing Thee. Amen.

CHAPTER 53

THAT THE GRACE OF GOD IS NOT COMMUNICATED TO THE EARTHLY- MINDED

SON, My grace is precious; it suffereth not itself to be mingled with external things nor with earthly consolations.

Thou must, therefore, cast away every obstacle to grace, if thou desire to receive its infusion.

Choose for thyself a retired place; love to dwell with thyself alone; seek not to be talking with anyone, but rather pour forth devout prayer to God, that thou mayst keep thy mind in compunction, and thy conscience pure.

Esteem the whole world as nothing; prefer attendance on God before all external occupations.

For thou canst not both attend to Me and at the same time delight thyself in transitory things.

Thou must be sequestered from thine acquaintance and from thy dearest friends, and keep thy mind disengaged from all temporal consolation.

So the blessed Apostle Peter beseeches the faithful of Christ to keep themselves as strangers and pilgrims in this world.

2. Oh, what great confidence shall he have at death, who is not detained by an affection to anything in the world!

But an infirm soul is not yet capable of having a heart thus perfectly disengaged from all things, neither doth the animal man understand the liberty of the interior man.

But if he will be truly spiritual, he must renounce as well those that are near as those that are afar off, and beware of none more than of himself.

If thou perfectly overcomest thyself, thou shalt more easily subdue all things else.

The perfect victory is to triumph over one's self.

For whosoever keepeth himself in subjection, so that sensuality obeyeth reason, and reason in all things is obedient to Me, he is indeed a conqueror of himself, and lord of the world.

3. If thou longest to climb this eminence, thou must begin manfully, and lay the axe to the root, in order to pluck out and destroy secret and inordinate inclination to thyself and to every private and material good.

From this vice, that man loveth self too inordinately, depends almost all whatsoever must be radically overcome; which being vanquished and brought under, a great peace and tranquillity will immediately ensue.

But because few labor to die perfectly to themselves, or fully to aim out of themselves, therefore do they remain entangled in themselves, nor can they be elevated in spirit above themselves.

But whoever desireth to walk freely with Me, it is necessary that he mortify all his perverse and inordinate affections, and not cleave with particular love or concupiscence to anything created.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

To withdraw the heart from ourselves and all created things, we should, first, frequently raise our affections to God, and endeavor to love Him in and above all things; secondly, we should renounce all voluntary attachments to creatures and to self-seeking; thirdly, we should separate and wean ourselves from all that is naturally pleasing to us, by regarding all things as passing away, and ourselves as pilgrims and strangers in a foreign land, who must allow themselves no delay in their journey, but pass forward on their way.

When thoroughly impressed with these words of the Apostle, "We have not a permanent dwelling-place here, but we look for one above," how little does a Christian feel attached to the goods, the vanities, and pleasures of this world, knowing that all these things pass away, and must finally end in death! It is easy, says St. Jerome, to despise all earthly things, when we reflect that we must die and leave them all behind us.

Why, then, does the figure of this world, which passes away and escapes from our sight, make so deep an impression upon our hearts, and the good things of eternity, which alone never fade, affect us so little! Why should we be so strongly attached to what we possess but for a moment and hold only in trust, and so little attracted by that which is destined to be ours, and forever an
eternity of happiness?

PRAYER

GRANT, O Lord, that my heart may loathe all earthly things, and cleave to those alone which are eternal, which will be given to me in exchange for the little I renounce in this world for the love of Thee. Grant me, O God, to love only that which I shall love forever, and to esteem everything as unworthy of a Christian soul, which is not the eternal and sovereign God.

“How little does this world appear,” said St. Ignatius, “when I view the heavens! and how little do the material heavens and this immense universe appear, when I think of Thee, my God!” Grant that in like manner, when impressed with the idea of Thine immensity I also may yield my whole soul to Thee. Amen.

CHAPTER 54

OF THE DIFFERENT MOTIONS OF NATURE AND GRACE

SON, observe diligently the motions of nature and grace; for they move with great contrariety and subtlety, and can hardly be distinguished but by a spiritual man, and one that is inwardly illuminated.

All men indeed desire good, and pretend to something good in what they say and do; therefore, under the appearance of good, many are deceived.

2. Nature is crafty and draweth away many, ensnareth them and deceiveth them, and always proposeth self as her end.

But grace walketh in simplicity, turneth aside from all appearance of evil, offereth no deceits, and doth all things purely for God, in Whom also it resteth as its last end.

3. Nature is neither willing to be mortified, to be restrained, to be overcome, nor to be subject, neither of its own accord to be brought under obedience.

But grace studieth the mortification of self, resisteth sensuality, seeketh to be subject, coveteth to be overcome, aimeth not at enjoying its own liberty, loveth to be kept under discipline, and desireth not to have the command over anyone; but under God ever to live, stand, and be, and for God's sake is ever ready humbly to bow down unto every human creature.

4. Nature laboreth for its own interest, and considereth what gain it may derive from another.

But grace considereth not what maybe advantageous and profitable to self, but rather what may be beneficial to many.

5. Nature willingly receiveth honor and respect.

But grace faithfully attributeth honor and glory to God.

6. Nature is afraid of shame and contempt.

But grace is glad to suffer reproach for the Name of Jesus.

7. Nature loveth ease and bodily repose.

But grace cannot be idle, and willingly embraceth labor.

8. Nature seeketh to have things that are curious and beautiful, and abhorreth such as are cheap and coarse.

But grace delighteth in that which is plain and humble, rejecteth not coarse things, nor refuseth to be clad in old garments.

9. Nature hath regard to temporal things, rejoiceth at earthly gains, is troubled at losses, and is irritated at every slight injurious word.

But grace attendeth to things eternal, and cleaveth not to temporal things; neither is disturbed at the loss of things, nor exasperated with hard words, for it placeth its treasure and its joy in Heaven, where nothing perisheth.

10. Nature is covetous, and liketh rather to take than to give, and loveth to have things exclusive and private.

But grace is kind and open-hearted, shunneth private interest, is contented with little, and judgeth it more blessed to give than to receive.

11. Nature inclineth a man to creatures, to his own body, to vanities, and to running to and fro.

But grace draweth to God and to all virtues, renounceth creatures, flieth the world, hateth the desires of the flesh, restraineth wanderings, blusheth to appear in public.

12. Nature willingly receiveth some exterior comfort, in which the senses may be gratified.

But grace seeketh to be comforted in God alone, and beyond all things visible to be delighted in the Sovereign Good.

13. Nature doth all for her own gain and interest; she can do nothing gratis; but hopeth to gain something equal or better for her good deeds, or else praise or favor; and coveteth to have her actions and gifts and sayings highly estimated.

But grace seeketh nothing temporal, nor requireth any other recompense but God alone for its reward; nor desireth anything more of the necessities of this life than may serve her to obtain things eternal.

14. Nature rejoiceth in a multitude of friends and kindred, glorieth in noble place and descent, smileth on them that are in power, flattereth the rich, and applaudeth such as are like itself.

But grace loveth even enemies, and is not puffed up with having a great many friends, nor hath any value for rank or birth, unless when joined with greater virtue; rather favoereth the poor than the rich; sympathizing more with the innocent than with the powerful; rejoiceth with him that loveth the truth, and not with the deceitful; ever exhorteth the good to be zealous for better gifts, and by the exercise of virtues to become like to the Son of God.

15. Nature easily complaineth of want and of trouble.

Grace beareth poverty with constancy.

16. Nature turneth all things to self, and contendeth and disputeth for self.

But grace referreth all things to God, from Whom they originally proceed; attributeth no good to self, nor doth she arrogantly presume.

Grace doth not contend, nor prefer her own opinion to others; but in every feeling and understanding submitteth herself to the eternal Wisdom and to the Divine scrutiny.

17. Nature coveteth to know secrets, and to hear news; desireth to appear abroad, and to have experience of many things by the senses; longeth to be taken notice of, and to do those things which may procure praise and admiration.

But grace careth not for the hearing of things new or curious, because all this springeth from the old corruption, since nothing is new or lasting upon earth.

Grace teacheth, therefore, to restrain the senses, to avoid vain complacency and ostentation, humbly to hide those things which are worthy of praise and admiration; and from everything, and in every knowledge, to seek the fruit of utility, and the praise and honor of God.

She desireth not to have self, or what belongeth to self, exalted; but wisheth that God may be blessed in His gifts, Who bestoweth all things through mere love.

18. This grace is a supernatural light, and a certain special gift of God, the proper mark of the elect, and pledge of eternal salvation; which elevateth a man from earthly things to love such as are heavenly, and from carnal maketh him spiritual.

Wherefore, as nature is the more kept down and subdued, with so much the greater abundance is grace infused; and every day by new visitations the interior man is reformed according to the image of God.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

WHAT is it to repose in God as in our v last end? It is to desire, to seek, and to love only Him; it is to do and to suffer all things for His sake; it is to acquiesce without any reserve in His holy designs; it is to will only what He wills; it is never to go astray, nor turn aside from the way of His ordinances; it is, in fine, to place our whole happiness in pleasing Him, and in not gratifying ourselves. But to do this is contrary to nature; grace alone can accomplish it.

I. Nature has always for its object self-satisfaction; but grace leads us to do violence to ourselves—that is, to deny and renounce ourselves in all things.

II. Nature is unwilling to die, to captivate itself, or to be made subject; but grace captivates the soul, restrains and subjects it to what is most hard and contrary to its inclinations; so that it gives up its own liberty on all occasions, fights against its own humors, and yields itself to God; and to honor His sovereign dominion, it rejoices in humiliations, restraint, and subjection.

III. Nature ever wishes to rule over others; but grace humbles us under the all-powerful hand of God, and makes us obedient for His love to those whom He has appointed in His place over us.

IV. Nature labors always for its own interest, to please and to establish itself; but grace labors only for God's sake, and watches incessantly over the motions of the heart to preserve it from sin, and to enable it to seek only establishment in Jesus Christ.

V. Nature is pleased with the esteem and praises of men, presuming on its own deserts; but grace makes us think ourselves unworthy of them, and refers all honor to God, and is so nice on this head that it will not permit the humble and faithful soul to make the least voluntary reference of vanity towards itself, lest it should take some degree of complacency in the good which it performs.

VI. Nature is afraid of disappointments, and flies from contempt; but grace receives these, and willingly endures them as justly inflicted upon us as sinners, and even makes us grateful to Jesus Christ for allowing us to share with Him what was wont to be the delight of His Heart.

VII. Nature loves the repose of a soft, indolent, and useless life; but grace seeks only labor; she dreads and avoids all useless thoughts, words, and actions; and not being able to endure indolence, either of the heart or mind, she leads the one to be impressed with a sense of the presence of God, and the other to live for His love.

VIII. Nature is attracted by everything that is great, beautiful, splendid, or commodious; but grace despises and shuns all these, and thinks nothing great but what is Divine, supernatural, and eternal.

The more, however, nature is repressed, the more abundantly does grace communicate itself to the soul, renew it in the interior spirit, and establish it perfectly in God.

PRAYER

IT is time, O Lord, I should cast myself on Thy mercy, to obtain the pardon of my sins, and on Thy love, to follow all its attractions. Support me, O Lord, and strengthen me by Thy grace against the inclinations of nature and self-love; for of myself it is impossible to resist and conquer the motions of corrupt nature, which is ever seeking its own gratification, in direct opposition to Thy holy will. Grant us Thy grace to rise superior to nature, to correspond faithfully with the inspirations of the Holy Spirit, to conquer and renounce ourselves, that we may be renewed and established in the possession of Thy love. Amen.

CHAPTER 55

OF THE CORRUPTION OF NATURE AND OF THE EFFICACY OF DIVINE GRACE

O LORD, my God, Who hast created me to Thine Own image and likeness, grant me this grace, which Thou hast shown to be so great, and so necessary to salvation, that I may overcome my most corrupt nature which draweth me to sin and to perdition.

For I perceive in my flesh the law of sin contradicting the law of my mind, and leading me captive to obey sensuality in many things.

Neither can I resist the passion thereof, unless Thy most holy grace, infused with fervor into my heart, assist me.

2. I stand in need of Thy grace and of great grace, in order to overcome nature, always prone to evil from its youth.

For fallen as it is through the first man Adam, and corrupted by sin, the punishment of that stain hath descended upon all mankind; so that nature itself, which by Thee was created good and right, is now taken for vice and the infirmity of corrupt nature; because the motion thereof, left to itself, draweth to evil and to things below.

For the little strength which remaineth is but as a little spark hidden under ashes.

This is the self-same natural reason, encompassed with much darkness, having yet the judgment of good and evil, and the discernment of truth and falsehood; though it be unable to fulfill all that it approves; neither doth it now enjoy the full light of truth, nor the former healthfulness of its affections.

3. Hence it is, O my God, that according to the inward man, I am delighted with Thy law, knowing Thy command to be good, just, and holy,

both for the reproof of all evil and for the avoiding of sin.

And yet in the flesh I serve the law of sin, while I obey sensuality rather than reason.

Hence it is, that to will that which is good is present with me, but how to accomplish it I find not.

Hence I often make many good purposes, but because grace is wanting to help my weakness, through a light resistance I recoil and fall off.

Hence cometh it to pass, that I know the way of perfection, and see clearly enough what I ought to do, but pressed down with the weight of my own corruption, I rise not to the things that are more perfect.

4. Oh, how supremely necessary for me, O Lord, is Thy grace, to begin that which is good, to go forward with it, and accomplish it.

For without it I can do nothing; but I can do all things in Thee, when grace strengtheneth me.

Oh, grace truly celestial, without which our own merits are nothing, neither are the gifts of nature to be esteemed!

No arts, nor riches, nor beauty or strength, no genius, no eloquence avail aught in Thy sight, O Lord, without grace.

For the gifts of nature are common to the good and to the bad; but grace or Divine love is the proper gift of the elect, with which they that are adorned are esteemed worthy of eternal life.

This grace is so excellent, that neither the gift of prophecy, nor the working of miracles, nor any speculation, how sublime soever, is of any value without it.

No, not even faith, nor hope, nor any other virtues, are acceptable to Thee, without charity and grace.

5. Oh, most blessed grace, which maketh the poor in spirit rich in virtues, and renderest him who is rich in many good things humble of heart, come, descend upon me, replenish me early with thy consolation, lest my soul faint through weariness and dryness of mind.

I beseech Thee, O Lord, that I may find grace in Thine eyes; for sufficient for me is Thy grace, though I obtain none of those things which nature desires.

If I be tempted and afflicted with many tribulations, I will fear no evils whilst Thy grace is with me.

This alone is my strength, this alone giveth counsel and help.

This is more mighty than all my enemies, and wiser than all the wise.

6. Thy grace is the mistress of truth, the teacher of discipline, the light of the heart, the consoler of anguish, the banisher of sorrow, the expeller of fear, the nurse of devotion, the producer of tears.

What am I without this but a withered branch and a useless trunk, meet only to be cast away?

Therefore, O Lord, let Thy grace always go before and follow me, and make me ever intent upon good works, through Jesus Christ Thy Son. Amen.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

WE do justice to ourselves when we mistrust our own strength, and to God, when we confide in the assistance of His grace. This is never wanting to us; but we are often wanting in our correspondence with it, though the only means of insuring salvation is to be faithful to its attractions, for they would lead us to the practice of every virtue. Human nature having been corrupted by the first man's sin, the effect of this corruption, as well as the stain of sin, descended to all mankind; hence are we constrained to fight incessantly against the motions of nature, and to follow those of grace. Without offering this holy violence to ourselves, by which we subdue and renounce our own inclinations, it would be impossible to be saved. In the state of innocence, all in man being orderly and subject to God, on account of original justice, the passions did not revolt against reason; but in our present state of sin, concupiscence continually rebels against the soul; this we must never cease to resist, until we cease to live.

PRAYER

WHEN, O God, shall Thy grace reign in our hearts, and subject them to the influence of Thy love? He who knows how to estimate the value and excellence of Thy grace, O Lord, which is a participation of Thy Divine nature, and a holy infusion of Thy goodness into our souls, will suffer the loss of all things else, rather than be deprived of such a treasure, and will not hesitate to make any sacrifice however great, to preserve it.

When I consider, O Lord, that those graces which I reject, or neglect, have been purchased for me at the price of Thy suffering and precious

Blood, how am I covered with confusion, for having made so bad a use of them, and for having preferred even trifles before them. Well may the account I must one day give of all the inspirations which I have neglected, as of so many drops of Thy sacred Blood dissipated or profaned, fill me with alarm and terror, and induce me henceforth to correspond with them most faithfully, that I may not forfeit my salvation. Amen.

CHAPTER 56

THAT WE OUGHT TO DENY OURSELVES, AND IMITATE CROSS BY THE CROSS

SON, as much as thou canst go out of thyself, so much wilt thou be able to enter into Me.

As the desiring nothing exteriorly bringeth peace, so doth the relinquishing thyself interiorly unite thee unto God.

I will have thee learn the perfect renunciation of thyself, according to My will without contradiction or complaint.

Follow Me: I am the way, the truth, and the life.

Without the way, there is no going; without the truth, there is no knowing; without the life, there is no living.

I am the way which thou must follow; the truth which thou must believe; the life which thou must hope for.

I am the way inviolable, the truth infallible, the life interminable.

I am the straightest way, the sovereign truth, the true life, the blessed life, the uncreated life.

If thou abide in My way, thou shalt know the truth, and the truth shall make thee free, and thou shalt attain life everlasting.

2. If thou wilt enter into life, keep the Commandments.

If thou wilt know the truth, believe Me: if thou wilt be perfect, sell all.

If thou wilt be My disciple, deny thyself.

If thou wilt possess a blessed life, despise this present life.

If thou wilt be exalted in Heaven, humble thyself in this world.

If thou wilt reign with Me, bear the cross with Me.

For none but the servants of the cross find the way of bliss and true light.

3. Lord Jesus, for as much as Thy way is narrow, and despised by the world, grant that I may follow Thee with the world's contempt.

For the servant is not greater than his lord, neither is the disciple above his master.

Let Thy servant be exercised in Thy life, for there is my salvation and true sanctification.

Whatever beside this I read or hear doth neither recreate nor fully delight me.

4. Son, since thou knowest these things, and hast read them all, happier shalt thou be if thou do them.

He that hath My Commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me; and I will love him, and I will manifest Myself unto him, and I will make him sit with Me in the kingdom of My Father.

5. Lord Jesus, as Thou hast said and hast promised, so let it be indeed, and may it be my lot to merit it.

I have received, from Thy hand, the cross; I will bear it, and bear it even unto death, as Thou hast laid it upon me.

Truly, the life of the good religious is a cross; but it is also the guide to Paradise.

We have begun: we may not go back, nor may we leave off.

6. Take courage, brethren; let us go forward together; Jesus will be with us.

For the sake of Jesus, we have taken up this cross; for Jesus' sake, let us persevere in it.

He will be our Helper, Who is our Captain and our Forerunner.

Behold, our King marcheth before us, Who will fight for us.

Let us follow Him manfully, let no one fear terrors; let us be ready to die valiantly in battle; nor let us bring disgrace upon our glory by flying from the cross.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

“If any man will come after Me,” says our Divine Redeemer, “let him deny himself, and let him take up his cross daily, and follow Me.” In this is included the whole practice of a Christian life, and the way marked out by

which we may securely go to eternal salvation, for Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life; the way we must follow, the truth we must believe, and the life we must hope for. To live as Christians, and to secure salvation, we must begin by renouncing and dying to ourselves; for this renunciation—this spirit of self-denial—is the first principle of the Gospel, the fundamental law of Christianity, our most essential duty, and the most effectual means of obtaining salvation. It is this interior mortification, this circumcision of the heart, this retrenchment of all criminal dangerous, or useless indulgences, which constitutes the difference between the elect and the reprobate. The character of our present sinful state should be that of penance, which is the end of Christianity and the assurance of salvation.

To carry our cross with Jesus Christ, is to suffer from all, while we are careful not to become the cause of suffering in others; it is to receive all pains of body and mind as coming from above; it is to endure with patience all the evils which happen to us from the justice of God or the injustice of man; it is to accept of contempt as our due, and to consider it our greatest misfortune to suffer nothing for God, but our sovereign happiness to suffer always for His love.

PRAYER

O DIVINE Savior, how few are willing to be with Thee on Calvary, yet how gladly would all accompany Thee on Thabor and in Heaven! Whilst each one desires and seeks exemption from the cross, to live in tranquillity and ease, no one chooses to suffer for Thee; although the only sure proof we can give Thee of our love, is to be willing to suffer with Thee, and to copy Thy painful example.

O cross of Jesus! how patiently do we bear thy sorrows in our hearts! How shall I be able to behold thee with confidence at the last day, if now I look upon thee with horror? How shall I be able to give up my soul in the embraces of the crucifix, if now I live an enemy to that emblem of mercy? Permit it not, O Jesus; and since Thou hast saved me by the Cross, grant that I may be ever willing to live in its practice, that I may die in its salvation. Amen.

CHAPTER 57

THAT A MAN SHOULD NOT BE TOO MUCH DEJECTED WHEN HE FALLS INTO SOME DEFECTS

SON, patience and humility under adversity please Me more than much consolation and devotion in prosperity.

Why art thou afflicted at a little matter said against thee?

If it had been more, thou oughtest not to have been disturbed.

But now let it pass; it is not the first, or anything new; nor will it be the last, if thou live long.

Thou art valiant enough, so long as no adversity cometh in thy way.

Thou canst also give good advice, and knowest how to encourage others with thy speech; but when any unexpected trouble cometh at thine own door, then thy counsel and thy courage fail thee.

Consider thy great frailty, which thou often experiencest in trifling occurrences; yet still do they happen for thy salvation, as often as these or similar trials befall thee.

2. Put it out of thy heart as well as thou canst; and if tribulation hast touched thee, yet let it not cast thee down, nor long entangle thee.

At least bear it patiently, if thou canst not joyfully.

And although thou be reluctant to bear it, and feel est indignation, yet repress thyself, and suffer no inordinate word to come out of thy mouth, whereby little ones may be offended.

This commotion excited will quickly be allayed, and inward grief will be sweetened by returning grace.

I still live, saith the Lord, ready to help thee, and comfort thee more than before, if thou put thy trust in Me, and devoutly call upon Me.

3. Be thou even-minded and gird thyself for greater endurance.

All is not lost, though thou feel thyself often afflicted or grievously tempted.

Man thou art, and not God; thou art flesh, not an Angel.

How canst thou continue ever in the same state of virtue, when this was wanting to the Angels in Heaven, and to the first man in paradise?

I am He Who raiseth up to safety them that mourn; and them that know their own infirmity I promote to My own Divinity.

4. O Lord, blessed be Thy word; it is sweeter to my mouth than honey and the honeycomb.

What should I do in my so great tribulations and necessities, didst Thou not strengthen me with Thy holy words?

Provided only I shall reach at last the haven of salvation, what doth it matter how many or how great trials I shall have endured?

Grant me a good end, grant me a happy passage out of this world.

Be mindful of me, O my God, and direct me in the right path to Thy kingdom. Amen.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

WHEN languishing under great and long-continued sufferings, let us remember that humble submission to the cross is incomparably more pleasing to God, than the enjoyment of consolation; and hence, that the greatest consolation of the soul should be, to be deprived of every other consolation but that of being ever faithful to its crucified Redeemer.

When tempted and inclined to sin, let us turn away from our evil inclinations, and resist them with all the strength and courage possible; let us have recourse to our Lord for His assistance, and to the Blessed Virgin for her prayers. The sense of evil must not deject or discourage us, but elevate us to God. In Him let us place all our confidence, and with an extreme horror for sin, withdraw our minds, as far as we are able, from the sinful objects which affect them, and our hearts from the criminal pleasures which allure them. That we may remain faithful under contradictions, let us endeavor, when the heart is moved, to keep silence, and to sacrifice to God

all those ill-natured reflections and excited feelings which proceed from resentment against those who have been the cause of our uneasiness; knowing that whatever we think or desire, or say against our neighbor, we think, desire and say against Jesus Christ.

Let us remember, in our interior afflictions, that all is not lost because we are in trouble and violent temptation. Let us resist temptation, submit to humiliation, and believe that before we can be elevated to a union with God, we must first descend into the depth of our own miseries.

PRAYER

PERMIT not, O Lord, my afflictions to become unavailable to salvation; and if I do not suffer them with joy, grant at least that I may endure them with patience. It is good for me to be humbled, that I may learn to keep Thy holy ordinances. Doubly wretched should I be, to make the miseries of this life serve only to consign me to eternal torments and despair! May then the sufferings which Thou sendest me, O God, become the pledges of my salvation. Amen.

CHAPTER 58

OF NOT SEARCHING INTO HIGH MATTERS, NOR SCRUTINIZING THE SECRET JUDGMENTS OF GOD

SON, beware of disputing about high matters and of the hidden judgments of God: why this man is so forsaken, and that other raised to so great grace: or why this person is so much afflicted, and that so highly exalted.

Such things exceed all human comprehension, nor is any reason or disputation competent to investigate the Divine judgments.

When, therefore, the enemy suggesteth such to thee, or certain curious men inquire into them, answer thou with the Prophet: “Thou art just, O Lord, and Thy judgment is right.” And again: “The judgments of the Lord are true, justified in themselves.”

My judgments are to be feared, not to be discussed, because they are incomprehensible to human understanding.

2. In like manner, do not be inquisitive or dispute concerning the merits of the Saints: who is more holy than another, or who greater in the Kingdom of Heaven?

Such oftentimes breed strifes and unprofitable contention, and nourish also pride and vainglory; whence arise envies and dissensions, while one man proudly prefers this Saint, and another that.

Now, to wish to know and to search into such matters is of no profit, but rather displeaseth the Saints; for I am not the God of dissension, but of peace, which peace consisteth rather in true humility than in self-exaltation.

3. Some by zeal of preference are attracted with greater affection towards these or those Saints: but this affection is rather human than Divine.

I am He Who made all the Saints; I gave them grace, I have granted them glory.

I know the merits of each; I prevented them with the blessings of My sweetness.

I foreknew My beloved ones before all ages.

I chose them out of the world; they did not first choose Me.

I called them by grace, I attracted them by mercy; I brought them safe through many temptations; I poured into them abundant consolations; I gave them perseverance; I have crowned their patience.

4. I know the first and the last; I embrace all with an inestimable love.

I am to be praised in all My Saints; I am to be blessed above all, and to be honored in each, whom I have so gloriously magnified and predestinated, without any foregoing merits of their own.

He, therefore, that despiseth one of the least of My Saints, honoreth not the greatest; for I have made both little and great.

And he that derogateth from any one of the Saints, derogateth also from Me, and from all others in the kingdom of Heaven.

They are all one through the bond of love, they have the same thoughts, the same will, and all love themselves each in the other.

5. And moreover, what is more exalted still, they love Me more than themselves, and their own merits.

For, rapt above themselves, and drawn away altogether from love of self, they live absorbed in the love of Me, in Whom also they rest by a happy fruition.

Nor is there anything that can turn them away or depress them; for they who are full of the eternal truth burn with the fire of unquenchable charity.

Therefore let carnal and animal men, who know not how to love anything but their own selfish gratification, forbear to dispute of the state of the Saints. They take away and add according to their own inclination, not as it pleaseth the eternal truth.

6. In many it is ignorance, more especially on the part of such as, being but little enlightened, seldom know how to love anyone with a perfect spiritual love.

They are as yet much inclined to such or such by a natural affection and human friendship; and as they are habituated with regard to things below, so they conceive the like imaginations of the things of Heaven.

But the distance is incomparable between the notions which the imperfect conceive and those which the illuminated behold through revelation from above.

7. Take heed, therefore, son, of treating too curiously of those things which exceed thy knowledge; but make it rather thy business and aim, that thou mayst be found, though even the least, in the kingdom of God.

And if anyone could know who were the holier or the greater in the kingdom of Heaven, what would this knowledge profit him, unless he should from this knowledge humble himself in My sight, and rise to the greater praise of My Name?

That man is much more acceptable to God, who thinketh of the greatness of his own sins, how little he is advanced in virtue, and at how great a distance he is from the perfection of the Saints than he who disputeth which of them is the greater, which the less.

It is better to supplicate the Saints in devout prayers and tears, and with a humble mind to implore their glorious suffrages, than by a vain inquisitiveness to search into their secrets.

8. They are well and perfectly contented, if men would but be contented, and bridle their vain discourses.

They glory not in their own merits; for they ascribe nothing of goodness to themselves, but all to Me, because gave all to them out of My infinite charity.

They are filled with so great a love of God, and with joy so overflowing, that there is nothing wanting to their glory, nor can anything be wanting to their felicity.

All the Saints, the higher they are in glory, the more humble they are in themselves, the nearer to Me, and the more beloved by Me.

And therefore thou hast it written, that they cast down their crowns before God, and fell on their faces before the Lamb, and adored Him that liveth forever and ever.

9. Many inquire who is the greater in the kingdom of God, who themselves know not whether they shall be worthy to be numbered among the least.

It is a great thing to be even the least in Heaven, where all are great; because all shall be called, and shall be the children of God.

The least shall be as a thousand, and the sinner of a hundred years shall die.

For when the disciples asked who was the greatest in the kingdom of Heaven, they received this answer: Unless you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven.

Whosoever, therefore, shall humble himself as this little one, he is the greater in the kingdom of Heaven.

10. Woe to them who disdain to humble themselves willingly with the children; for the lowly gate of the heavenly kingdom will not admit them to enter.

Woe also to the rich, who have their consolation here.

For when the poor enter into the kingdom of God, they shall stand lamenting without.

Rejoice, ye humble, and be glad, ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of God—if, at least you walk in the truth.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

IF we would honor the Saints as they deserve, we should invoke and imitate them, rather than dispute about their degrees of heavenly glory. We should endeavor to copy their bright example; for this is really to honor the Saints, to become Saints like themselves.

God hath formed all the Saints upon the model of His Son, the Word incarnate; so that we cannot become the objects of God's love, if we make not Jesus Christ the object of our imitation. He has willed, said St. Cyprian, that there should be Saints in all states and conditions of life, to make known to all men that each one in his own state may sanctify his soul, and obtain salvation, by living a holy and Christian life. He has constituted Saints for our protectors and our models, that we may gain Heaven by walking in their footsteps; they hear our prayers, and being secure of their own happiness, are solicitous only for ours.

Let us then endeavor to live and to suffer with them here, that we may live and reign with them hereafter; and let us remember that, according to the Gospel, there is but one way of arriving at the happy term which they have reached, which is the way of penance, mortification, and disengagement from the world; every other way leads to perdition.

PRAYER

THOU desirest, O Lord, our sanctification and our salvation, and Thou givest us the most efficacious means of attaining them, but we have hitherto miserably neglected them. Grant that henceforth we may really honor the Saints by forming ourselves upon their example, and rendering ourselves worthy of the eternal happiness which they possess, by copying their endeavors to obtain it. Suffer us not to be idle admirers of their felicity, but doers of these good deeds by which they obtained it, that thus we may be assured that ours also shall be the kingdom of Heaven. Amen.

CHAPTER 59

THAT ALL HOPE AND CONFIDENCE IS TO BE FIXED IN GOD ALONE

LORD, what is my confidence which I have in this life, or what is my greatest solace amongst all the things that appear under Heaven?

Is it not Thou, my Lord God, of Whose mercies there is no number?

Where was it ever well to me without Thee, or when was it ever ill with me when Thou wast present?

I had rather be poor for Thy sake, than rich without Thee.

I prefer rather to sojourn upon earth with Thee, than to possess Heaven without Thee.

Where Thou art, there is Heaven; and there is death and Hell, where Thou art not.

Thou art all my desire, and therefore I must needs sigh after Thee, and cry and pray.

In short, I cannot fully confide in anyone to bring me seasonable help in my necessities, save only in Thee, my God.

Thou art my hope, my confidence, my comforter, and in all things most faithful.

2. All seek the things that are their own; Thou designest only my salvation and profit, and turnest all things to my good.

And although Thou expose me to various temptations and adversities, yet all this Thou ordainest for my good, who art wont to prove Thy beloved servants a thousand ways.

Under which probation Thou oughtest not less to be loved and praised, than if Thou didst replenish me with heavenly consolations.

3. In Thee, therefore, O Lord God, do I place all my hope and refuge; on Thee I cast all my tribulation and anguish; for I find all to be weak and inconstant whatever I behold out of Thee.

For neither will many friends be of service to me, nor can powerful auxiliaries assist me, nor wise counselors give me a profitable reply, nor the books of the learned give me consolation, nor any precious substance ransom me, nor any secret place secure me, if Thou Thyself do not assist, help, strengthen, comfort. instruct, and guard me.

4. For all things which seem to be for our peace and for our happiness, when Thou art absent are nothing, and contribute nothing to our felicity.

Thou, therefore, art the fountain of all good, the height of life, and the depth of wisdom; and to trust in Thee above all things is the strongest comfort of Thy servants.

Unto Thee do I lift up my eyes; in Thee, O my God, Father of mercies, I put my trust.

Bless and sanctify my soul with heavenly benediction, that it may be made Thy holy habitation and the seat of Thine eternal glory: and let nothing be found in the temple of Thy Divinity that may offend the eyes of Thy majesty.

According to the greatness of Thy goodness and the multitude of Thy tender mercies, look down upon me, and give ear to the prayer of Thy poor servant, a far distant exile in the region of the shadow of death.

Protect and preserve the soul of Thy poor servant amid so many dangers of this corruptible life, and direct him by Thine accompanying grace, along the path of peace, to the land of perpetual light. Amen.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

WHEN afflicted and loaded with interior troubles, or exterior trials and contradictions, or with all these at the same time, let us confidently have recourse to God, Who alone can aid and assist us, and let us say to Him: Lord, Thou knowest the designs of our enemies against our souls; how shall we be able to escape them if Thou assist us not? We raise up our eyes and our hearts towards Thee, Who alone art able to protect us; Thou art our God engaged to help us; Thou art our Redeemer, and wilt deliver us; Thou art

our Father, and with Thine assistance we shall not yield nor be in danger of perishing.

PRAYER

THOU hast said, O Lord, that to become Thy disciples we must deny ourselves, and take up our cross and follow Thee. Thou knowest our extreme repugnance to both one and the other. Suffer not our faith on this point to condemn us for not practicing what we believe to be necessary for salvation, but grant that as we believe so may we ever live as becometh Christians. Amen.

The Voice of Christ.

COME to Me, all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you, saith the Lord.

The Bread that I will give is My Flesh, for the life of the world.

Take ye and eat; this is My Body, which shall be delivered for you; this do for the commemoration of Me.

He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood abideth in Me, and I in him.

The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.

BOOK IV

CHAPTER 1

WITH HOW GREAT REVERENCE CHRIST OUGHT TO BE RECEIVED

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE

THESE are Thy words, O Christ, the eternal truth, though not all uttered at one time, nor written in one place.

Since, therefore, they are Thine, and true, they ought all to be thankfully and faithfully received by me.

They are Thine, and Thou hast spoken them; and they are also mine, because Thou hast delivered them for my salvation.

I willingly receive them from Thy mouth, that they may be the more inseparably engrafted in my heart.

Words of so great tenderness, so full of sweetness and love, encourage me; but my own sins terrify me, and an unclean conscience driveth me back from receiving so great mysteries.

The sweetness of Thy words beckoneth me onwards; but the multitude of my offenses weigheth me down.

2. Thou commandest me to approach to Thee with confidence, if I would have part with Thee; and to receive the food of immortality, if I desire to obtain life and glory everlasting.

Come, sayest Thou to me, all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you.

O sweet and loving word in the ear of a sinner, that Thou, O Lord my God, dost invite the poor and needy to the Communion of Thy most holy Body!

But who am I, O Lord, that I should presume to approach unto Thee?

Behold, the heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee; and Thou sayest: Come ye all to Me.

3. What meaneth this most loving condescension and so friendly invitation?

How shall I dare to approach, who am conscious to myself of no good on which I can presume?

How shall I introduce Thee into my house, who have too often offended Thy most benign countenance?

The Angels and the Archangels stand in reverential awe; the Saints and the just are afraid; and Thou sayest: Come ye all to Me.

Unless Thou, O Lord, didst say this, who could believe it to be true?

And unless Thou didst command it, who would venture to approach?

4. Behold, Noe, a just man, labored a hundred years in building the ark, that with a few he might be saved: and how, then, shall I be able in the space of one hour to prepare myself to receive with reverence the Maker of the world?

Moses, Thy great servant and Thy special friend, made an Ark of incorruptible wood, which also he covered with most pure gold, that he might deposit therein the tables of the law, and I, a corrupted creature, shall I presume so easily to receive Thee, the Maker of the law and the Giver of life?

Solomon, the wisest of the kings of Israel, employed seven years in building a magnificent temple for the praise of Thy Name, and for eight days he celebrated the feast of the dedication thereof; he offered a thousand peacemaking victims, and brought in a solemn manner the Ark of the Covenant into the place prepared for it, with sound of trumpet and rejoicing; and I, unhappy, and the vilest of men, how shall I introduce Thee into my house, who can hardly spend one half-hour devoutly? And would that I had ever even once spent one half-hour as I ought!

5. O my God, how much did they endeavor to do to please Thee! Alas, how little is it that I do! How short a time do I spend when I prepare myself to communicate!

Seldom am I wholly collected; very seldom free from all distraction.

And yet surely in the life-giving presence of Thy Deity, no unbecoming thought should occur, nor anything created occupy my mind; for it is not an Angel, but the Lord of the Angels Whom I am about to entertain.

6. There is, moreover, a very great difference between the Ark of the Covenant with its relics, and Thy most pure Body, with its unspeakable virtues; between those sacrifices of the Law, which were figures of things to come, and the true Sacrifice of Thy Body, which is the accomplishment of all ancient sacrifices.

7. Why, then, am I not more inflamed in seeking Thine adorable presence?

Why do I not prepare myself with greater solicitude to receive Thy sacred gifts, seeing that those ancient holy Patriarchs and Prophets, yea, kings also and princes, with the whole people, manifested so great affection of devotion towards Thy Divine worship?

8. The most devout King David danced with all his might before the Ark of God, as he called to mind the benefits in times past bestowed upon his fathers: he made musical instruments of various kinds; he composed psalms, and appointed them to be sung with joy, and he himself like wise often sung them upon his harp, inspired with the grace of the Holy Ghost; he taught the people of Israel to praise God with their whole heart, and with one harmonious voice to bless and praise Him every day.

If so great devotion was then displayed, and such a memorial of the praise of God made in the presence of the Ark of the Covenant, how great a reverence and devotion now ought I and all Christian people to have in presence of this Sacrament, and in receiving the most precious Body of Christ!

9. Many run to sundry places to visit the relics of the Saints, and wonder to hear of their remarkable deeds; they behold the spacious buildings of their churches, and kiss their sacred bones, enveloped in silk and gold:

And behold, Thou art here present to me on the altar, my God, the Saint of Saints, the Creator of men, and the Lord of Angels.

Oftentimes in seeing those things men are moved with curiosity and the novelty of sights, and carry home but little fruit of amendment; and the more so when persons run lightly hither and thither without real contrition.

But here, in the Sacrament of the altar, Thou art wholly present, my God, the man Christ Jesus; where also is derived in full copiousness, the fruit of eternal salvation, as often as Thou art worthily and devoutly received.

To this, indeed, we are not drawn by any levity, curiosity, or sensuality, but by a firm faith, a devout hope, and a sincere charity.

10. O God, unseen Creator of the world, how wonderfully dost Thou deal with us! how sweetly and graciously dost Thou order all things for Thine elect, to whom Thou offerest Thyself to be received in this Sacrament!

For this exceedeth all understanding; this in a particular manner draweth the heart of the devout, and enkindleth their love.

For they, Thy faithful ones, who dispose their whole life to amendment, frequently receive from this Most August Sacrament a great grace of devotion and love of virtue.

11. Oh, the wonderful and hidden grace of the Sacrament, which only the faithful of Christ know, but which,

unbelievers, and such as are slaves to sin, cannot experience!

In this Sacrament is conferred spiritual grace; virtue lost is again restored in the soul; and beauty disfigured by sin returneth again.

So great sometimes is this grace, that from the fullness of the devotion conferred, not only the mind, but the frail body also feeleth an increase of strength bestowed on it.

12. Still must we lament and deplore exceedingly our tepidity and negligence, that we are not drawn with greater affection to receive Christ, in Whom consisteth all the hope and merit of those that are to be saved.

For He is our sanctification and our redemption; He is the consolation of pilgrims, and the eternal fruition of the Saints.

Greatly to be lamented, therefore is it, that many take so little heed of this saving majesty, which rejoiceth Heaven, and preserveth the whole world.

Oh, blindness and hardness of the heart of man, that doth not more regard so unspeakable a gift, or even from a daily use of it falleth into a disregard of it!

13. For if this Most Holy Sacrament were celebrated in one place only, and consecrated by only one priest in the world, with how great a desire, thinkest thou, would men be affected towards that place, and to such a priest of God, that they might see the divine mysteries celebrated?

But now that there are many priests, and Christ is offered up in many places, that the grace and love of God to man may appear so much the greater, by how much the more bounteously is this sacred Communion distributed throughout the entire world.

Thanks be to Thee, O good Jesus, eternal Shepherd, Who hast vouchsafed to feed us poor exiles with Thy precious Body and Blood, and

to invite us to the receiving of these mysteries, even by an address from Thine own mouth, saying: Come to Me, all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

WHO can conceive or explain the excellence of the all Divine gift which Jesus Christ bestows upon us in giving us His blessed Body and Blood in the Holy Eucharist, in which we receive God with all His perfections, the plenitude of His Divinity, all the virtues and grace of His humanity, and all the merits of a Man-God? We may say, with St. Augustine, that God, though all-powerful, cannot bestow upon us anything greater than Himself, Whom He here gives us; though most rich and liberal, yet He cannot dispense to us anything more from the treasures of His bounty than this one gift of His Body and Blood, His whole self: and though the uncreated and incarnate Wisdom of the Father, yet He cannot invent a more efficacious means of gaining our hearts than to enter into them by the Holy Communion, and thus unite and transform us into Himself.

But what should delight our minds and hearts is, that in the sacred Host which we receive, and even in its smallest part (that we may lose nothing of so precious a gift) He has included all the riches of His bounty, wisdom and love, to communicate them all to us, and by communicating them to us, to enable us to live in a supernatural and Divine life by feeding and nourishing us with God; for it is to this end that He assumes a new life upon our altars, to impart it to us in the Holy Communion, by which, says the Council of Trent, He infuses into our souls all the riches of His love. Yes, my Savior, after having bestowed upon us all the goods of nature and of grace, Thou addest still more to Thy gifts—Thy whole Self in the Blessed Eucharist. After having been liberal of Thy gifts in our regard, which, although most precious, are still much less than Thyself, in this adorable Sacrament Thou art prodigal even of Thy very Self. Who then can refuse and withhold his heart from God, Who comes thus to take possession of it, as belonging to Him upon so many titles?

PRAYER

WHAT return can I make Thee, O Lord, for all Thy gifts and favors? What can I give Thee in exchange for Thyself, Whom Thou didst bestow upon my soul, to become to me the principle of a truly Christian life, and the pledge of my salvation? As often as I have the honor of receiving Thee, my most amiable Savior, I may say that Thou art all mine, and yet, alas! after having received Thee so frequently, I cannot as yet say that I am all Thine. Come, O Jesus, and take full possession of my ungrateful and unfaithful heart, which is so little devoted to Thee, and so much given to the world and to itself. Conquer its perversity, O Lord, and oblige it to love Thee, that it may hate itself, and, recalling its affections, devote them entirely to Thee. It is Thine, O God, as the work of Thy hands and the price of Thy Blood; it is Thy purchased inheritance, of which Thou comest to take possession. Permit it not to depart from Thee to become the slave of its passions, but, being come to me, establish Thy reign entirely and forever over me.

Suffer me not, O Jesus, when I receive Thee, Who art my all, both now and forever, to be so unhappy, like many Christians, as to be Thine only in appearance and exteriorly, only in desires and wishes, or to be but half Thine, so as to wish to reconcile God and the world, vanity and devotion; which Thou declarest in the Gospel is impossible and incompatible with salvation. Suffer me not to be so miserable as to belong to Thee only for a time, by almost immediately after Communion falling again into voluntary habitual faults, which Thy presence should correct, or at least diminish; for the fruit of a good Communion is strength, courage, and constancy to resist and conquer ourselves.

Receive, O Jesus, my most humble thanks for the institution of this adorable Sacrament in which Thy love triumphs over all Thine other attributes, to feed and nourish me with Thine Own Body and Blood. In gratitude for so great a favor, for so wonderful and Divine a benefit, I beseech Thee to accept of the sincere, perfect, and irrevocable offering which I now make of my whole self to Thee for time and eternity. Amen.

CHAPTER 2

THAT THE GREAT GOODNESS AND LOVE OF GOD ARE SHOWN TO MAN IN THIS SACRAMENT

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE

CONFIDING, O Lord, in Thy goodness, and in Thy great mercy, I come sick to my Savior, hungry and thirsty to the Fountain of life, needy to the King of Heaven, a servant to my Lord, a creature to my Creator, and one in desolation to my loving Comforter.

But whence is this to me, that Thou shouldst come to me? Who am I, that Thou shouldst give to me Thyself?

How dare a sinner appear before Thee? And how dost Thou vouchsafe to come to a sinner?

Thou knowest Thy servant, and dost know that he has nothing of good in himself, that Thou shouldst bestow this favor upon him.

I confess, therefore, my unworthiness; I acknowledge Thy bounty; I praise Thy goodness; and I give Thee thanks for Thine exceeding love.

For it is for Thine Own sake Thou dost this, not on account of my merits—that Thy goodness may be the more manifest to me, that Thy love may be more abundantly imparted, and Thy humility more perfectly commended.

Since, therefore, this pleaseth Thee, and Thou hast ordained it thus, Thy merciful condescension pleaseth me also; and, oh! that my iniquity may be no obstacle!

2. O most sweet and most benign Jesus, how great reverence and thanksgiving, with perpetual praise, are due to Thee for the receiving of Thy sacred Body, whose dignity no man can be found able to unfold!

But on what shall I think in this Communion, when I approach to my Lord, Whom I can never duly venerate, and yet desire to receive with devotion?

What can I think on better or more salutary than to humble myself entirely before Thee and extol Thine infinite goodness above me?

I praise Thee, O my God, and I extol Thee forever; I despise myself, and cast myself down into the depth of my own vileness.

3. Behold, Thou art the Saint of Saints, and I am the scum of sinners.

Behold, Thou bowest Thyself down to me, who am not worthy to look up to Thee.

Behold, Thou comest to me; Thou wishest to be with me; Thou invitest me to Thy banquet; Thou desirest to give me heavenly food, even the Bread of Angels, to eat; no other, indeed, than Thyself, the living Bread, Who didst come down from Heaven, and givest life to the world.

4. Behold, whence love proceedeth; what a condescension shineth forth! How great thanksgiving and praise are due to Thee for these!

Oh! how salutary and profitable was Thy design when Thou didst institute it! How sweet and delightful this banquet, wherein Thou hast given Thyself for our food!

Oh, how admirable is Thy work, O Lord! How mighty is Thy power! How infallible Thy truth!

For Thou hast spoken, and all things were made, and that which Thou commandest has been done.

5. A wonderful thing it is, and worthy of faith, and transcending all human intelligence, that Thou, O Lord

my God, true God and man, art contained entire under a small form of bread and wine, art eaten by the receiver, and without being consumed.

Thou, the Lord of all things, Who standest in need of no one, art pleased by this Sacrament to dwell in us.

Preserve my heart and my body immaculate, that, with a joyful and pure conscience, I may often be able to celebrate Thy sacred mysteries, and, receive for my eternal salvation what Thou hast principally ordained and instituted for Thy honor and perpetual remembrance.

6. Rejoice, O my soul, and give thanks unto God for so noble a gift, and so singular a solace left to thee in this valley of tears.

For as often as thou repeatest this mystery and receivest the Body of Christ, so often dost thou perform the work of thy redemption, and art made partaker of all the merits of Christ.

For the charity of Christ is never diminished, and the greatness of His propitiation is never exhausted.

Therefore oughtest thou to dispose thyself for this by an ever-recurring renovation of spirit, and weigh with attentive consideration the great mystery of salvation.

And as often as thou celebratest or hearest Mass, it ought to seem to thee as great, new, and delightful, as if Christ that very day first descending into the Virgin's womb was made man; or, hanging on the Cross, suffered and died for man's salvation.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

I. WHEN thou approachest the Holy Communion, consider the greatness and majesty of God, Whom thou art going to receive, and the baseness and unworthiness of thyself, a vile and sinful creature, who art about to receive Him. Humble thyself in His presence, and say to Him: Who am I, Lord, that I should dare to approach Thee; and Who art Thou, that Thou shouldst debase Thyself so low as to come to me! When I consider, on the one hand, the excellence of Thy sanctity and purity, and, on the other, the corruption and disorders of my soul, I am forced to acknowledge that I am most unworthy to receive Thee, and that I cannot, without rashness, permit Thee to enter into my heart. But, knowing the excess of Thy goodness, and the need which I have of Thee for my sanctification and salvation, I will approach to Thee, my Savior! with a holy confidence; for Thou hast said that those who are well stand not in need of a physician, but only those who are sick; to Thee, Who comest to seek and to save those who are gone astray, and are in danger of perishing; to Thee, Who art the "Word made flesh for love of man;" to Thee Whose desire is that we be converted and live. I am indeed a grievous sinner, but I will no longer remain such. I feel neither consolation nor delight in Thy holy presence, but sensible of my many miseries, I come to lay them all at Thy sacred feet; here I will rest.

II. Whence comes this honor and this happiness, that my God should so far conceal His sovereign majesty as to become the food and nourishment

of my soul? Ah! it is the profound humility of a Man-God, Who would carry His abjection not only so far as not to appear as God, but not even as man, and thus eclipse all the splendors of His majesty, to evince the excess of His bounty and the charms of His love for us. O my Savior, whilst Thou concealest Thy Divine perfections from our sight, that we may not be dazzled by their glory, Thou dost disclose to us the depth of Thy humility, that we may be induced to copy it in our conduct. O my soul, canst thou desire to be known by others, when thou beholdest thy God concealed and hidden in the Holy Eucharist! How shall such a miserable worm of the earth as I am dare to exalt myself, when I reflect that my God annihilates Himself in this mystery, to impress upon me the character of His humility?

III. Say not, Christian soul, that thou dost not dare to approach frequently to a God so great and awful. Thou art indeed unworthy, and thou wilt not cease to be so, if thou dost not endeavor to attend diligently to thy correction; but, says St. Augustine, this Bread of Angels is not a poison; it is a nourishment given for thy use, and necessary for thy salvation. Receive it, therefore, and frequently nourish thy soul with it, but let not habit deprive thee of all relish for this heavenly food, as it generally does for all worldly dainties. The holy dispositions in which thou shouldst receive the God of holiness ought to increase with the frequency of thine approach to the holy table. It is not for thee to know this increase; but there is always advancement when thou dost strive with greater earnestness to become more holy by means of recollection and humility.

PRAYER BEFORE COMMUNION

I BELIEVE, O Lord, that Thou art my God and the sovereign Judge Who will decide my eternal doom. With what respect, therefore, ought I to approach Thee. Alas! Who am I, that I should dare even so much as to lift up my eyes towards Thee? How then shall I dare to receive Thee into my heart, which is so miserable, so corrupt, and so unworthy of Thee? Supply, O Lord, my great unworthiness by the excess of Thy merciful goodness, which does not suppose, but constitutes the merit of Thy creatures.

O infinite greatness! O sovereign majesty! O immensity of my God, concealed and annihilated in the Sacred Host which I am going to receive! To Thee do I give all glory, and to myself all possible contempt, which

alone is my due. Come, O Jesus, come and fill my empty and depraved heart with the plenitude of Thy love. Come, and do Thou take place of self within me, and raise me, who am poor, from the dust and from nothing, and elevate me to the possession of Thy love. But am I nothing? I am worse, I am a sinner, and deserve Hell. Ah! I would willingly say, with St. Peter, "Depart from me, O Lord;" but fearing lest Thou shouldst say to me, as Thou didst say to him, that I shall have no part in Thy glory, if I do not honor Thy humility, I consent to Thy being born in my soul, although a thousand times poorer than the crib, that henceforth I may live only by and for Thee. Amen.

CHAPTER 3

THAT IT IS PROFITABLE TO COMMUNICATE OFTEN

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE

[It will be observed that portions of this chapter are applicable only to priests.]

BEHOLD, I come to Thee, O Lord, that, by Thy gift, it may be well with me, and that I may be delighted in Thy holy banquet which Thou, O God, hast prepared in sweetness for the poor.

Behold in Thee is all that I can or ought to desire; Thou art my salvation and redemption, my hope and my strength, my honor and my glory.

Make, therefore, the soul of Thy servant joyful this day, because unto Thee, O Lord Jesus, have I lifted up my soul.

Now do I desire to receive Thee devoutly and reverently; I long to bring Thee into my house, so that, with Zacheus, I may deserve to be blessed by Thee, and to be numbered amongst the children of Abraham.

My soul longeth eagerly after Thy Body; my heart desireth to be united with Thee.

2. Give Thyself to me, and it is enough; for without Thee no comfort is of any avail.

Without Thee I cannot exist; and without Thy visitation I am unable to live.

Therefore must I often come to Thee, and receive Thee as the medicine of my salvation, lest perhaps I faint in the way, should I be deprived of this heavenly food.

For so Thou, O most merciful Jesus, when Thou hadst been preaching to the people and curing their various maladies, didst once say: I will not send

them fasting to their home, lest they faint on the way.

Deal with me, therefore, in like manner, Who hast left Thyself in this Sacrament for the comfort of the faithful.

For thou art the sweet refection of the soul, and he that shall eat Thee worthily shall be partaker and heir of everlasting glory.

Necessary, indeed, is it for me, who so often fall and commit sin, so quickly grow torpid and faint, that by frequent prayers and Confessions, and by the sacred receiving of Thy Body, I may again be renewed, cleansed, and inflamed, lest, perhaps, by longer abstaining, I fall away from my holy purpose.

3. For prone are the senses of man to evil from his youth; and unless the Divine medicine succor him, he quickly falleth to worse things.

The Holy Communion, therefore, withdraweth from evil, and strengtheneth in good.

For if now I am so often negligent and lukewarm, whenever I communicate or celebrate, what would it be if I did not take this remedy, and did not seek so great a help?

And although I am not every day prepared, nor well disposed to celebrate, yet I will endeavor at certain times to receive the Divine mysteries, and to make myself partaker of so great a grace.

For this is the one chief consolation of a faithful soul, so long as she sojourneth afar off from Thee in this mortal body, that, mindful of her God, she receives her Beloved with a devout mind.

4. O wonderful condescension of Thine affection towards us! That Thou, O Lord God, the Creator and Giver of life to all spirits, shouldst vouchsafe to come to a poor soul, and with Thy whole Divinity and humanity to feast her hunger with fatness.

O happy mind and blessed soul! Which deserveth to receive Thee, her Lord God, devoutly, and in receiving Thee to be filled with spiritual joy.

Oh, how great a Lord doth she entertain! how beloved a Guest doth she bring into her house, how sweet a Companion doth she receive, how faithful a Friend doth she welcome, how beautiful and noble a Spouse doth she embrace, to be loved above all beloved, and beyond all that can be desired.

Let Heaven and earth, O my most sweet Beloved, with all their attire, be silent before Thy face; for whatever of glory or beauty they possess, all is

the gift of Thy bounty; nor can they attain to the beauty of Thy Name Whose wisdom is beyond all numbers.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

That we ought ardently to desire to receive the Holy Communion, or at least be sensible of the need we have of it, and should frequently receive it.

We have great reason to be humbled and confounded before our Lord Jesus Christ, when we feel ourselves cold and indifferent in approaching to Him, and are induced to receive Him in the Holy Communion only through obedience, and not by the ardor of our desires. For how can we know Thee, O Jesus, and not love Thee, and how can we love Thee and not desire to receive Thee, and to be transformed into Thee, by worthily and frequently receiving Thee in the Holy Communion? And yet, O God, how often does insensibility towards Thee desolate my soul, and would discourage me, were I not assured that, although I am deficient of that love which I desire to have for Thee, which I cannot acquire of myself, but which I ask of Thee, Thou wouldst still have me receive Thee through obedience and with humility. What, O God, would become of me, in the dryness which I experience, were I not assured that the great miseries of my soul draw down Thy mercies upon me, and that Thy delight is to dwell in a heart which, conscious of its own unworthiness, does all in its power to prepare itself for Thee? In truth, the humble acknowledgment of our unworthiness, after a Confession the most entire of which a Christian is capable, supplies the place of ardent desires for the Holy Communion; and we cannot either honor or please God more than by debasing ourselves for His love before His sacred majesty. We should not, therefore, abstain from the Holy Communion, because we feel no devotion nor any desire of approaching; but we should communicate as often as a wise and discreet director advises us, and receive Jesus Christ in obedience to him at whose voice Jesus Himself descends upon the altar.

Is there anything more easy or more consoling, than to reflect, when we are preparing ourselves in the best manner we are able for the Holy Communion, that Jesus Christ has said that those who are well, need not a physician, but only such as are sick.

PRAYER FOR A GOOD COMMUNION

O JESUS! it is with full confidence in those words which Thou speakest to me, and which I have just read, that I prepare myself to receive Thee, not because I deserve such a favor, but because I have need of Thee, and my soul cannot live without Thee. It is afflicted with many maladies and infirmities which Thou alone, its sovereign and charitable physician, canst heal. Come then, my Savior, and apply a remedy to my wounds, heal the pride of my heart with Thy humility, and consume all self-love with the fire of Thy Divine charity. Come and invest me with Thy strength, that I may conquer my passions: animate me with Thy spirit, that I may seek only to please Thee and live that supernatural and Divine life which is characteristic of the life which Thou livest, and which Thou bringest to me in the Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist. Amen.

CHAPTER 4

THAT MANY BENEFITS ARE BESTOWED ON THOSE WHO COMMUNICATE DEVOUTLY

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE

O LORD my God, present Thy servant with the blessings of Thy sweetness, that I may deserve to approach worthily and devoutly to Thy magnificent Sacrament.

Raise up my heart towards Thee, and deliver me from oppressive slothfulness.

Visit me with Thy saving mercy, that I may taste in spirit Thy sweetness, which plentifully lieth hid in this Sacrament as in a fountain.

Illuminate also my eyes, to behold so great a mystery, and strengthen me to believe it with an undoubting faith.

For it is Thy work, and not man's power; Thy sacred institution, not the invention of man.

For no one can be found capable of himself to conceive and understand these things, which transcend even the intelligence of the Angels.

What, then, of so high and sacred a mystery shall I, an unworthy sinner, who am but earth and ashes, be able to investigate or comprehend?

2. O Lord, in the simplicity of my heart, with a good and firm faith, and at Thy command, I come to Thee with hope and reverence; and I believe truly that Thou art here present in the Sacrament, both God and Man.

Thou willest, then, that I receive Thee, and unite myself to Thee in charity.

Wherefore, I beseech Thy clemency, and I beg of Thee to give me a special grace, that I may be wholly dissolved in Thee, and overflow with Thy love, and no more concern myself about any other kind of consolation.

For this most high and most worthy Sacrament is the health of soul and body, the medicine of every spiritual malady; in which my vices are cured, my passions restrained, temptations overcome or lessened, greater grace infused, incipient virtue increased, faith confirmed, hope strengthened, and charity inflamed and enlarged.

3. For Thou hast bestowed, and still oftentimes dost bestow, many good things in this Sacrament to Thy beloved who communicate devoutly, O my God, the support of my soul, the repairer of human infirmity, and the giver of all interior consolation.

For Thou impartest unto them much consolation against their various tribulations, and Thou liftest them up from the depth of their own dejection to the hope of Thy protection, and Thou dost interiorly recreate and enlighten them with a certain new grace; so that they who first were anxious, and without sensible affection before Communion, after being refreshed with this heavenly food and drink, find themselves changed for the better.

And in such a way Thou art pleased to deal with Thine elect, that they may more truly acknowledge and plainly experience how great is their weakness when left to themselves, and how much of bounty and grace they receive from Thee.

For of themselves they are cold, dry, and indevout; but by Thee they deserve to become fervent, cheerful, and devout.

For who, humbly approaching to the fountain of sweetness, doth not carry thence some little sweetness?

Or who, standing by a copious fire, doth not derive therefrom some little heat?

And Thou art a fountain ever full and overflowing; Thou art a fire always burning and never failing.

4. Wherefore, if I may not draw out of the fullness of the fountain, nor drink to satiety, I will at least set my mouth to the orifice of this heavenly pipe, that so I may draw thence some little drop to allay my thirst, and may not wholly wither away.

And if as yet I cannot be all heavenly and all on fire, like the Cherubim and Seraphim, I will still endeavor to follow after devotion, and prepare my heart, that so I may acquire some small spark of divine fire by humbly receiving this life-giving Sacrament.

And whatever is wanting to me, O good Jesus, most holy Savior, do Thou in Thy bounty and goodness supply for me, Who hast vouchsafed to call all unto Thee, saying: "Come to Me, all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you."

5. I labor, indeed, in the sweat of my brow, I am tortured with grief of heart, I am burdened with sins, I am troubled with temptations, I am entangled and oppressed with many evil passions; and there is no one to help me, no one to deliver and save me, but Thou, O Lord God, my Savior, to Whom I commit myself and all that is mine, that Thou mayst keep me, and bring me to everlasting life.

Receive me, for the praise and glory of Thy Name, Who hast prepared Thy Body and Blood for my food and drink.

Grant, O Lord, my salvation, that with the frequenting of this Thy mystery the affection of my devotion may increase.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

Ask of Jesus Christ a lively faith in His real presence, and an ardent love for Him, in the Most Holy Sacrament of the altar.

I BELIEVE, O Lord, that Thou art present, both Body and Soul, in the adorable Sacrament which I am about to receive. Thou wilt there make me partake of the merits of Thy blessed humanity, and wilt inebriate me with the plenitude of Thy Divinity. Change, then, O Lord, change the indifference of my heart into an ardent desire of loving Thee, of pleasing and possessing Thee. Permit me not to regard or to receive Thee with coldness, Who comest to inflame my heart with the fire of Thy love. Supply in me whatever is wanting of faith in a mystery so incomprehensible to all human understanding; enliven me with a lively sense of Thy presence, and grant that my heart may receive Thee as its God with reverence, as its Savior with confidence, and as its Father with love.

Is it possible, my soul, that, surrounded and replenished with all the ardor of God's love for thee, thou shouldst still remain all ice in the midst of so much fire! Alas! O Jesus I how miserable am I to feel so much eagerness to please myself, and so much indifference about pleasing Thee! "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst heal me;" say then to me, as Thou didst say to the leper: "I will:" be thou healed of thy tepidity and insensibility.

PRAYER

To Thee do I address myself, O my most amiable Savior, that I may obtain fervor and fidelity in Thy love. Thou knowest that, full of myself and of self-love, I am most unworthy and incapable of Thy love; but I beseech Thee, the God of my heart, to inspire me to copy Thy virtues, to follow Thine inclinations, and to rely on Thy merits; instill into my soul Thy meekness, humility, and patience, that so I may be animated with Thy Spirit, and live by Thee. Amen.

CHAPTER 5

ON THE DIGNITY OF THE SACRAMENT AND ON THE PRIESTLY STATE

THE VOICE OF THE BELOVED

IF thou hadst the purity of an Angel and the sanctity of St. John the Baptist, thou wouldst neither be worthy to receive nor to handle this Sacrament.

For this is not due to man's merits, that a man should consecrate and handle the Sacrament of Christ, and receive for food the Bread of Angels.

Great is the mystery, and great the dignity of priests, to whom is given that which to the Angels is not granted. For, priests alone, rightly ordained in the Church, have the power of celebrating and consecrating the Body of Christ.

A priest, indeed, is the minister of God, using the word of God, by the command and institution of God; but God is there the principal Author and invisible Worker, to Whom all whatsoever He willeth is subject, and all whatsoever He commandeth is obedient.

More oughtest thou, therefore, to credit God, the Omnipotent, in this most excellent Sacrament, than thine own sense or any visible sign. And therefore thou oughtest to approach this work with fear and reverence.

Take heed to thyself, and see what kind of ministry has been delivered to thee by the imposition of the hands of the Bishop.

Behold, thou art made a priest, and art consecrated to celebrate; see now that faithfully and devoutly, in due time, thou offer up sacrifice to God, and that thou show thyself blameless.

Thou hast not lightened thy burden, but art now bound by a stricter bond of discipline, and art obliged to greater perfection of sanctity.

A priest ought to be adorned with all virtues, and set the example of a good life to others.

His conversation should not be with the popular and common ways of men, but with the Angels in Heaven, or with perfect men upon earth.

2. A priest clad in sacred vestments, is Christ's viceregent, that he may suppliantly and humbly pray to God for himself and all the people.

He hath before and behind him the Sign of the Cross of our Lord, that he may ever remember the Passion of Christ.

Before him he beareth the Cross on the chasuble, that he may diligently behold the footsteps of Christ, and fervently endeavor to follow after them.

Behind him he is marked with the Cross, that he may mildly suffer for God's sake whatsoever adversities befall him from others.

He weareth the Cross before, that he may bewail his own sins; and behind, that through compassion he may lament the sins of others, and know that he is placed in the midst, between God and the sinner.

Neither ought he to grow weary of prayer and the holy Oblation, until he deserve to obtain grace and mercy. When a priest celebrateth, he honoreth God, he rejoiceth the Angels, he edifieth the Church, he helpeth the living, he obtaineth rest for the departed, and maketh himself partaker of all good things.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

Of the holy dispositions with which the priest should celebrate Mass, and with which a Christian should assist at it, in order to hear it with advantage.

THE priest, by his ordination, has received the power of consecration, so that, according to St. Augustine, God, as it were, becomes again incarnate, and takes upon Himself a new life, in the hands of the priest by virtue of his word. It is this power which, in some sense, makes him superior to the Angels, and exalts him in dignity above all other creatures.

Such being thine exalted dignity, O priest of the Lord, how great must be thine obligations! Thine endeavor should be to cherish within thee throughout the day the same dispositions with which thou shouldst approach the altar.

Keep thyself closely united to God, recollected in His presence, faithful to His graces, and diligent in all duties; cherish continually within thy soul,

and offer to Jesus Christ, the sentiments and, as it were, the condition of a victim entirely devoted to His glory and the salvation of souls.

When thou celebratest this adorable sacrifice, endeavor, first, to effect within thine own interior what Jesus accomplishes upon the altar, to humble thyself most profoundly, and immolate thyself and thy petitions to God. Secondly, unite the sacrifice of thy soul to that of the Body and Blood of Christ; enter into His sentiments and dispositions, as the minister of the sacrifice which He offers to His eternal Father, by thy means, for the salvation of men; offer thyself a victim of love for that God Who Himself becomes the victim of His love for thee. Cease to be thine own, and become entirely His, as He becomes entirely thine upon the altar, that He may live sacramentally in thy heart, and consummate the great work of thy salvation.

The priest, who feeds upon God, and is every day nourished with His Body and Blood, should live only for God, says St. Augustine; and if the priests of the Old Law were required to live holily, because they offered bread and incense to the Lord, how much more perfect should the sanctity of the priests of the New Law be, who every day offer God to God Himself! “How pure,” exclaims St. Chrysostom, “should that hand be which immolates the Body of the Word Incarnate! How spotless that tongue which is purpled with the Blood of Jesus! And how clean that heart into which the infinite purity of a Man God is received, together with all His other attributes!”

Reflect, then, O priest of the Lord, that Jesus Christ, the great High Priest, celebrates Mass in thy person, and that as thou art invested with His power to consecrate upon the altar, so thou shouldst also be animated with His Spirit, and conform thy life to His Divine example. When thou dost pronounce the words of consecration, give thine all, thy heart, and thy whole self, together with the sacred words which thou utterest.

Whilst thou art putting on thy vestments, meditate on the mysteries of Christ’s Passion which they represent, and beg pardon for thy sins, which were the cause of all His sufferings.

When going to the altar, reflect that thou art accompanying Jesus Christ in spirit to Calvary, and that thou art going to behold Him, with the eyes of faith, mystically die by thy hands.

At the foot of the altar ask pardon for thy sins and for those of the faithful, whose place thou holdest as their agent and mediator.

At the Gloria in Excelsis, beseech God to bestow upon thee, and upon all who assist at the holy sacrifice, an efficacious will to be saved.

At the Epistle, conceive a holy desire that Christ may be born on the altar, and in the souls of all; such a desire as the Prophets had for the coming of the Messias, and the Apostles to establish Jesus Christ in the hearts of all mankind.

At the Gospel, enliven thy faith and animate thy zeal; thy faith, to believe and to practice the Gospel, and thy zeal, to instill its maxims into others.

At the Credo, beseech the Lord that thy life may be conformable to thy faith.

At the Offertory, offer the sacrifice of the holy Mass to the honor of God, in thanksgiving for His blessings, in atonement for thy sins, to obtain all those virtues necessary for salvation, and for the relief and consolation of the Souls in Purgatory.

At the Canon, transport thyself in spirit into Heaven: and endeavor there to enter into the dispositions of the Blessed Virgin and of the Apostles, that through thee He may be born again upon the altar, and in the hearts of all the faithful.

At the Consecration, let all yield to God, Who comes upon the altar at thy word, and takes upon Himself, as it were, a new life.

Join thyself to His intentions, pray through His merits, immolate thy whole self to Him; and, overflowing with His love, present Him to His eternal Father for the living and for the dead.

At the Pater Noster, enter into the sentiments of perfect confidence in Jesus Christ.

At the dividing of the Host, which mystically represents the death of Jesus Christ, beseech Him to assist thee in perfectly dying to thyself, in giving thy whole heart and affections to Him, and to bring thee to a holy life, and a good death.

At the Communion, renew thy faith in the God Whom thou receivest, thy confidence in thy Savior, and thy love for thy Father, Who comes to take possession of thy heart, and to give thee Himself as thine inheritance. Say to Him with thy whole soul and all thy powers: "Be Thou the God of my heart, and my portion forever!"

After the Communion, return thanks to Jesus Christ for having given Himself entirely to thee, and beseech Him that nothing may any more

separate thee from Him.

In a word, let both priests and people, after having celebrated or after having heard Mass, endeavor, by a life of separation from the vanities and pleasures of the world, by mortifying their passions, and by wholly applying themselves to their duties, to make themselves, as St. Augustine says, the one, priests of the Lord according to the spirit, and His victims according to the flesh; the other, priests, not in character and in power, but in intention, by entering into the views of Jesus Christ upon the altar. Remember how the pagans returned from Calvary, penetrated with a lively faith in Jesus Christ, overwhelmed with sorrow for their sins, and truly changed and converted; and reflect how much more you ought, after having celebrated Mass, which is the same sacrifice as that of Calvary, or, after having heard it, to be filled with contrition for your offenses, and resolved to live henceforth by faith and hope, and as victims of the love of Christ Jesus our Lord.

PRAYER

To obtain from God the grace of saying and of hearing Mass well.

O LORD, Who in the adorable sacrifice of the Mass art Thyself both priest and Victim, immolating Thyself, by the priest's ministry, to the justice of Thy Father for the salvation of men, grant that we may sacrifice our hearts in union with the sacrifice of Thy Body and Blood, and endeavoring to produce in our souls the same that Thou effectest upon the altar, employ ourselves, during the holy Mass, in the exercise of profound humility and prayer, and offer ourselves as victims for Thy people in and by Thee.

We offer up this adorable sacrifice, which is the same as that of Calvary, to Thy honor and glory, in thanksgiving for all Thy benefits, to obtain the virtues necessary for salvation, and to bring down Thy mercy upon us in forgiveness of our manifold offenses. Grant, O Jesus, that the sacramental life which Thou assumest on the altar, may become for us, by real or spiritual Communion, the source of a new life. As Thou takest place of the substances of bread and wine, by their destruction, so do Thou take place of our self-love in our hearts, and, destroying all that is estranged from Thee,

establish Thy love in place of our self-love, and let everything give way to Thee.

O adorable Victim of our salvation and love! As Thou makest choice of our hearts for the consummation of Thy sacramental life, be pleased to complete in us the sacrifice of self, which would separate us from Thee; suffer us not, whilst we feed upon the Lamb of God, to live only as men, but enable us to imitate Thee in the practice of those virtues which in the Holy Communion Thou comest to imprint in our souls. Amen.

CHAPTER 6

OF SELF-INTERROGATION CONCERNING THE EXERCISE PROPER BEFORE COMMUNION

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE

WHEN I consider Thy dignity, O Lord, and my own vileness, I am affrighted exceedingly, and am confounded within myself.

For if I do not appeal to Thee, I fly from life; and if I intrude myself unworthily, I incur Thy displeasure.

What, then, shall I do, O my God, my Helper and Counselor in necessities?

2. Do Thou teach me the right way; set before me some short exercise suitable for thy Holy Communion.

For it is well to know after what manner indeed, I ought devoutly and reverently to prepare my heart for Thee, for the profitable receiving of Thy Sacrament, as well as for celebrating so great and Divine a sacrifice.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

ONE of the best dispositions for worthily receiving the Holy Communion, is to be resolved that Jesus shall reign forever the God of our hearts—that is, that we will obey Him in all things, and refuse Him nothing that He demands of us, for it is in quality of King that He comes to us, and as the King of all bounty; He comes into our souls to be again born there, and to reign over our passions and affections.

PRAYER

YES, my Savior, when I communicate, I indeed make Thee the Master, the King, and the God of my heart; I then protest sincerely that I am entirely Thine; but, after receiving Thee, I become again the slave of my own humor, and shaking off the sweet yoke of Thine empire, I subject myself to the servitude of concupiscence. At the time of Communion, I am all Thine, but soon, alas I do I again become wholly devoted to myself. What an injustice to Thy dominion! What an outrage on Thy bounty I thus to rob Thee of a heart which upon so many titles belongs only to Thee! No, I will never again withdraw myself from the empire of Thy love: secure to Thyself Thine own conquest, and suffer me not to escape from Thee, or ever more to be separated from Thee. Amen.

CHAPTER 7

OF THE EXAMINATION OF OUR OWN CONSCIENCE, AND OF A RESOLUTION OF AMENDMENT

THE VOICE OF THE BELOVED

ABOVE all things, it behooveth the priest of God to come to the celebrating, handling, and receiving this Sacrament with the greatest humility of heart and lowly reverence; with a full faith, and a pious intention for the honor of God.

Examine diligently thy conscience, and to the best of thy power cleanse and purify it by a true contrition and humble confession; so that thou neither have nor know of anything weighty, which may give thee remorse, and hinder thy free access.

Hold in displeasure all thy sins in general, and for thy daily excesses more especially grieve and lament.

And, if time admit, confess to God, in the secrecy of thy heart, all the miseries of thy passions.

2. Sigh and grieve that thou art still so carnal and worldly, so unmortified from thy passions.

So full of the motions of concupiscence; so unguarded in thine outward senses; so often entangled with many vain imaginations.

So much inclined to things exterior; so negligent of the interior.

So prone to laughter and dissipation; so hard to tears and compunction.

So inclined to relaxation, and to the pleasures of the flesh; so sluggish in austerity and fervor.

So curious to hear news and see fine things; so remiss to embrace humiliation and abjection.

So covetous to possess much; so sparing in giving, so close in retaining.

So inconsiderate in talking; so unobservant of silence.

So disordered in thy manners; so overeager in thine actions.

So immoderate in food; so deaf to the Word of God.

So ready for repose; so slow to labor.

So wakeful to hear idle tales; so drowsy at the sacred vigils.

So hasty to finish thy devotions; so wandering in attention.

So negligent in reciting the hours; so tepid in celebrating; so dry in communicating.

So quickly distracted; so seldom fully recollected.

So suddenly moved to anger; so apt to take offense at others.

So prone to judge; so severe in reprehending.

So joyful in prosperity; so weak in adversity.

So often proposing many good things; and bringing so little to effect.

3. Having confessed and bewailed these and thine other defects with sorrow, and great displeasure at thine own weakness, make a strong resolution of always amending thy life, and of advancing for the better.

Then, with an entire resignation, and with thy whole will, offer thyself up to the honor of My Name, on the altar of thy heart, as a perpetual holocaust; faithfully committing to Me both thy soul and body.

That so thou mayst be worthy to approach to offer up a sacrifice to God, and profitably to receive the Sacrament of My Body.

4. For there is no oblation more worthy, no satisfaction greater, for the washing away of sins, than to offer thyself purely and entirely to God, together with the oblation of the Body of Christ, in the Mass, and in the Communion.

If a man does what lieth in him, and is truly penitent, as often as he shall approach to Me for pardon and grace, I live, saith the Lord, and I will not the death of the sinner, but rather that he be converted and live; wherefore I will no longer remember his sins, but all shall be forgiven him.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

I. THE first disposition for a worthy Communion is purity of heart, which consists in detachment from all willful sin, and from all affection to it. It is in this sense that St. Augustine, speaking to priests and those who communicate, says that we must come to the altar innocent. You should therefore, before Communion, carefully examine your conscience in detail upon your ordinary faults. See before God if there be not some considerable sin upon your soul, and if so, confess it with sincere sorrow; for in this case it is not sufficient, says the Council of Trent, to make an act of contrition, you must also go to Confession before you approach to the Holy Communion. In this manner it explains those words of St. Paul, “Let a man prove himself,” that so he may be prepared to receive worthily this heavenly Bread, and may not eat it to his own condemnation.

II. Be not satisfied with examining whether your conscience reproaches you with any considerable sin; but examine also before God, and detest even the smallest sins which you so easily commit, especially such as are knowingly committed against the inspirations of grace; sins of habit, of attachment, and of indisposition—that is, those which are most consonant with your natural inclinations; the sins which you may have occasioned in others, or in which you have participated; hidden sins, etc. Ask pardon for them of Jesus Christ, before you receive Him, and pray for grace to correct them, and to punish yourself for having committed them.

PRAYER

An Act of Contrition before Communion.

I COME to Thee, O Jesus, as a sick man to his physician, in hopes of obtaining a cure. Thou hast said that those who are afflicted with disease, should approach to Him Who is able and willing to heal them; wherefore do I desire to approach to Thee and to receive Thee frequently, the true Physician and Savior of my soul, for I have need of Thee to heal my many maladies. To Thee do I cry with the leper in the Gospel: “Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean.”

Inspire me with the same holy confidence with which the sick, during Thy lifetime, presented themselves before Thee. Grant that, like them, I may say within myself, “If I shall but touch the hem of His garment,” that is, the appearances under which Thou art concealed, “I shall be healed.”

With the like confidence, I approach and prostrate myself at Thy sacred feet, and beg pardon for all the sins of my whole life, which I detest from my heart, for the love of Thee.

Pardon, O Jesus, pardon me all that is displeasing to Thee. Suffer me not to receive Thee unworthily. I truly regret having wounded Thy heart, insulted Thy goodness, provoked Thine anger, resisted Thy grace and the allurements of Thy love. I have offended all Thy Divine perfections: forgive and chastise me, and let my punishment be to hate myself, that I may love Thee. To Thee alone do I address my grief; I have grievously offended Thee, and for this will I live and die in the sorrows of repentance. Take from me life, or take away sin, for I can no longer live and offend Thee; I desire to avoid everything that is displeasing to Thee, or can in any degree remove or separate me from Thee. Amen.

CHAPTER 8

OF THE OBLATION OF CHRIST ON THE CROSS, AND THE RESIGNATION OF OURSELVES

THE VOICE OF THE BELOVED

As I willingly offered Myself to God the Father for thy sins, with My hands stretched out upon the Cross and My Body naked, so that nothing remained in Me which was not completely turned into a sacrifice to appease the Divine wrath; even so oughtest thou willingly to offer thyself to Me daily in the Mass, as intimately as thou canst, with thy whole energies and affections, for a pure and holy oblation.

What more do I require of thee, than that thou endeavor anew to resign thyself to Me?

Whatsoever thou givest except thyself, I regard not; for I seek not thy gift, but thyself.

2. As it would not suffice thee, if thou hadst all things except Myself, so neither can it please Me, whatever thou givest, unless thou offer Me thyself.

Offer thyself to Me, and give thy whole self for God, and thine offering shall be accepted.

Behold, I offered My whole Self to the Father for thee; I have given My whole Body and Blood for thy food, that I might be all thine, and thou mightest be always Mine.

But if thou wilt stand upon self, and not offer thyself freely to My will thy offering is not complete, nor will there be an entire union between us.

A spontaneous oblation of thyself into the hands of God ought to precede all thy works, if thou wouldst obtain liberty and grace.

For, therefore, it is that so few become illuminated and internally free, because they know not how entirely to renounce themselves. My sentence standeth sure: Unless a man renounce all that he possesseth, he cannot be My disciple.

Thou, therefore, if thou desirest to be My disciple, offer up thyself to Me with all thine affections.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

BE not of the number of those who, when they communicate, give themselves entirely to God, and immediately after, return to themselves; whose lives being a constant succession of good desires and frail relapses, are never firmly established either in the fear or love of God. It is of such souls, who are thus mean and ungenerous towards a

God Who is so prodigal of Himself towards them, that the Prophet speaks, when he says: “On account of the iniquity of his covetousness, I was angry, and I struck him; I hid My face from thee, and was angry; and he went away wandering, in the way of his own heart.” (Isaias, lvii, 17)

PRAYER

YES, O Lord, Thou art now the God of my heart, for Thou comest to take possession of it, and to give me Thyself to repose within it. Mayst Thou be such in all things and forever; mayst Thou alone be the God of my soul in time, that Thou mayst be my portion for eternity. Unite me to Thyself, by making me like to Thee: meek, humble, patient and charitable. Suffer not the union with which I am now honored to remain ineffective, like that of a dry branch with the sap of the vine, or languid, like that of a paralyzed arm with a vigorous body; but grant that it may become lively, vivifying and perpetual, like that of food with the body which it nourishes. Amen.

CHAPTER 9

THAT WE MUST OFFER OURSELVES AND ALL THAT IS OURS, TO GOD, AND PRAY FOR ALL

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE

LORD, all things are Thine that are in Heaven and upon earth.

I desire to offer up myself to Thee as a voluntary oblation, and to remain for ever Thine.

Lord, in the simplicity of my heart, I offer myself to Thee this day, as Thy servant forevermore, for Thy homage, and for a sacrifice of perpetual praise.

Receive me with this sacred oblation of Thy precious Body, which I offer to Thee this day in the invisible presence of assisting Angels, that it may be for salvation unto me and all Thy people.

2. Lord, I offer to Thee all my sins and offenses, which I have committed in Thy sight and that of Thy holy Angels from the day in which I was first capable of sin until this hour, upon Thine altar of propitiation: that Thou mayst at the same time burn and consume them all with the fire of Thy charity, and mayst blot out all the stains of my sins, and cleanse my conscience from every fault, and restore unto me Thy grace, which by sin I have lost, fully pardoning me all and mercifully receiving me to the kiss of peace.

3. What can I do for my sins but humbly confess and lament them, and incessantly implore Thy propitiation?

Hear me, I beseech Thee, in Thy mercy, when I stand before Thee, O my God.

All my sins are exceedingly displeasing to me; I will never commit them any more; but I am sorry for them, and I will be sorry for them as long as I live; and am prepared to do penance, and to make satisfaction to the utmost of my power.

Forgive, O my God, forgive me my sins, for the sake of Thy holy Name.

Save my soul which Thou hast redeemed with Thy precious Blood.

Behold, I commit myself to Thy mercy: I resign myself into Thy hands.

Deal with me according to Thy goodness, not according to my impiety and wickedness.

4. I offer also to Thee all my good works, though very few and imperfect; that Thou mayst amend and sanctify them; that Thou mayst have a pleasurable regard to them, and make them acceptable to Thee, and always make them tend to better; and mayst not the less conduct me, a slothful and unprofitable creature, to a blissful and glorious end.

5. I offer to Thee also all the pious desires of devout persons; the necessities of my parents, friends, brothers, sisters, and all those that are dear to me; and of all such as, for the love of Thee, have been benefactors to me or others; and who have desired and besought me to offer up prayers and Masses for themselves and all theirs, whether they are still living in the flesh or are already dead to this world; that they may all experience the assistance of Thy grace, the help of Thy consolation, protection from dangers, and deliverance from the punishment to come; and that, thus freed from all evils, they may joyfully pay to Thee a noble sacrifice of praise.

6. I offer up also to Thee prayers and this sacrifice of propitiation, for them in particular who have in any way injured me, grieved me, or abused me, or have inflicted upon me any hurt or injury.

And for all those likewise whom I have at any time grieved, troubled, oppressed, or scandalized, by words or deeds, knowingly or unknowingly; that it may please Thee to forgive us all our sins and mutual offenses.

Take O Lord, from our hearts all suspicion, indignation, anger, and contention, and whatever else may wound charity and lessen brotherly love.

Have mercy, O Lord, have mercy on those that crave Thy mercy; give grace to the needy; and grant us so to live that we may be worthy to enjoy Thy grace, and that we may attain unto life everlasting. Amen.

WEARY of the servitude of our passions, and fatigued with the inefficacy of our desires, by which we promise God what we never perform, and pretend to be His, without ceasing to be our own or weaning ourselves from the world and vanity, let us now at least, after having received Him, make a firm resolution of giving ourselves really to Him, and of dedicating and consecrating ourselves to His love. It is time, O my Savior, that this heart, which was made for Thy love, and redeemed by Thy Blood, should forever cease to be devoted to itself, and become wholly and irrevocably Thine; and I protest at Thy sacred feet, that such is my ardent desire. This heart has received Thee, my Jesus, and Thou desirest to consummate within it that new life which Thou hast assumed on the altar, to make it a victim of Thy love. Sacrifice then to Thy Father Thy holy life together with my life of sin; and never suffer me to recall that heart which on this day I wholly give to Thee.

PRAYER

I ADORE Thee, O Jesus, with reverence as my God, with confidence as my Savior, with love as my Father, and with humble fear as my Judge. When Thou shalt come to judge me, Thou Who hast now come to enter into my soul to sanctify and to save it, condemn me not. I offer Thee the holy Mass which I have heard, and the Communion which I have received, to obtain the pardon of all my sins, for the conversion of sinners, and the sanctification of all the just. Enlighten my understanding, change my heart, regulate my life, suppress my passions, and, as an absolute master, reign Thou entirely over me. Would that I could make Thee known and loved by all the world! I would willingly give my life to procure for Thee the glory and the delight of beholding all mankind subjected to Thine empire. Grant, O Jesus, I may seek only to please Thee in all things, and that, detached from all things, I may unite myself to Thy love, and thus commence in time what I hope in Thy great mercy to continue throughout eternity. Amen.

CHAPTER 10

THAT THE HOLY COMMUNION IS NOT LIGHTLY TO BE FORBORNE

THE VOICE OF THE BELOVED

THOU oughtest often to have recourse to the fountain of grace and of Divine mercy, to the fountain of goodness and all purity; that thou mayst be healed of thy passions and vices, and mayst deserve to be made stronger and more vigilant against all the temptations and deceits of the devil.

The enemy, knowing the very great fruit and remedy contained in the Holy Communion, striveth by every method and occasion, as far as he is able, to withdraw and hinder faithful and devout persons from it.

2. For when some are disposed to prepare themselves for the Sacred Communion, they suffer the worst assaults and illusions of Satan.

The wicked spirit himself, as it is written in Job, cometh amongst the sons of God, to trouble them with his accustomed malice, or to make them over fearful and perplexed; that so he may diminish their devotion, or by his assault take away their faith, if perhaps they may altogether forbear Communion, or approach with tepidity.

But not the least regard must be had to his wiles and suggestions, be they ever so, shameful and abominable; but all such imaginations are to be turned back upon his own head.

The wretch must be contemned and scorned; nor is Holy Communion to be omitted on account of any assaults and commotions which he may awaken.

3. Oftentimes also a person is hindered by too great solicitude for having devotion, and a certain anxiety about making Confession.

Follow herein the counsel of the wise, and lay aside all anxiety and scruple; for it impedeth the grace of God, and destroyeth the devotion of the mind.

Abandon not the Holy Communion for every trifling perturbation and heaviness; but go quickly to Confession, and willingly forgive others all their offenses.

And if thou hast offended anyone humbly crave pardon, and God will readily forgive thee.

4. What doth it avail thee to delay for a longer time thy Confession, or to put off the Holy Communion?

Purge thyself as soon as possible, spit out the poison quickly, make haste to take the remedy, and thou wilt find it better for thee than if thou hadst deferred it for a longer time.

If today thou lettest it alone for this cause, tomorrow, perhaps, some greater will fall out; and so thou mayst a long time be hindered from Communion, and become more unfit. As quickly as thou canst, shake off present heaviness and sloth; for it is to no purpose to continue long in uneasiness, to pass a long time in unquietness, and for these daily impediments to withdraw thyself from the Divine mysteries.

Yea, rather it is very hurtful to delay Communion long; for this usually bringeth a heavy slothfulness.

Alas, some tepid and lax persons readily take occasion to delay going to their Confession, and desire that their Sacred Communion should be, therefore, deferred, lest they be obliged to give themselves to greater watchfulness.

5. Ah, how little charity and what slender devotion have they who so easily put off Holy Communion!

How happy is he, and how acceptable to God, who so liveth, and keepeth his conscience in such purity, as to be prepared and well disposed to communicate every day, were it permitted to him, and he might pass without observation!

If sometimes a person abstaineth out of humility, or from some legitimate preventing cause, he is to be commended for reverence.

But if sloth creep in upon him, he must bestir himself, and do what lieth in him; and the Lord will quicken his desire according to his good will which He chiefly regardeth.

6. And when, indeed, he is lawfully hindered, he should yet always have a good will and a pious intention of communicating, and so he will not be without the fruit of the Sacrament.

For every devout person may every day and every hour, without any prohibition, approach to a spiritual Communion with Christ with much profit.

And yet on certain days, and at appointed times, he ought to receive sacramentally, with an affectionate reverence, the Body of his Redeemer; and rather aim at the praise and honor of God than seek his own consolation.

For as often as he communicateth mystically and is invisibly refreshed, so often doth he devoutly celebrate the mystery of Christ's Incarnation and Passion, and is inflamed with His love.

7. But he who prepareth not himself otherwise than when a festival draweth near, or when custom compelleth, shall oftentimes be unprepared.

Blessed is he who offereth himself up as a holocaust to the Lord as often he celebrateth or communicateth.

Be neither too slow nor too quick in celebrating; but observe the good common medium of those with whom thou livest.

Thou oughtest not to beget weariness or tedium in others; but keep the common way, according to the institution of Superiors, and rather accommodate thyself to the utility of others than follow thine own devotion and affection.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

I. THE ardent desire which Jesus Christ evinces to come and take possession of our hearts, that He may reign there as God, should convince us that we afford Him real pleasure by worthy and frequent Communion; and that, by staying away from the Holy Table, apparently from respect, but in reality from sloth, as is the case with many Christians, we deprive Jesus Christ of the satisfaction He would have in remaining with us, testified in these words: "My delight is to be with the children of men." To abstain through our own fault from the Holy Communion, is to oppose the designs of His wisdom; it is to interrupt the connecting links of our predestination. because it is to deprive ourselves of one of the most effectual means of

securing the salvation of our souls, a worthy and frequent participation of the Holy Communion (for these two should never be separated), and it is to expose ourselves to the danger of losing those graces upon which depends our eternity.

II. Now the most essential dispositions for good and frequent Communion, are first, a fixed resolution never to commit any willful sin; secondly, to be determined, after Confession, to amend our faults and to lead a truly Christian life; thirdly, to trust and hope that the real presence of Jesus Christ in our souls, and the efficacy of His grace, will preserve us in this twofold resolution. Hence habitual sinners who communicate but seldom, on account of their unworthiness, must renounce their bad habits, and prove themselves beforehand, that they may not receive to their own condemnation. Worldly souls who excuse themselves from frequent Communion, under the specious pretext of their attachment to the world, must wean themselves from the vanities, amusements, and engagements of a worldly life, that they may be properly disposed to communicate frequently and worthily; and pious persons who would approach but seldom for fear of an unworthy Communion, must not absent themselves through false humility, but, as the Author says, humble themselves and approach.

PRAYER

TRULY, Lord, I do not deserve to be admitted at Thy Holy Table, as a child in his Father's house, because I have rendered myself unworthy of this honor by my sins and infidelities; but as Thou invitest all to come to Thee who labor and are heavy laden with the weight of their miseries, promising to refresh and to comfort them, I will pay more regard to Thy mercy than to my own unworthiness.

Thou sayst in the Gospel, O Jesus, that those who are sick stand in need of a physician; I will therefore frequently approach Thee, for I have great need of the abundance of Thy graces, and of the multitude of Thy mercies, to keep me in Thy love, to preserve me from sin, and to defend me against the enemies of my salvation.

I feel no devotion when I go to Communion; but it is not necessary sensibly to experience Thy consolations and graces, but only to be faithful to them: and frequent Communion is the means of inspiring me with this

fidelity, since the fruit of a good Communion is not always spiritual sweetness, but strength to conquer ourselves, and fidelity in the discharge of our duties.

I am indeed subject to many faults, weak, slothful, and inconstant in Thy service; but who is so able to correct me of my weaknesses, and to alleviate my miseries, as Thou, my Jesus, Who art the God of mercy and the Bread of the strong?

I beseech Thee, therefore, O my most amiable Savior, to grant me the dispositions necessary for frequent and worthy Communion. Come, my Jesus, come often into my heart, Thou Who art the life of my soul, for I desire to live only for and by Thee. Amen.

CHAPTER 11

THAT THE BODY OF CHRIST AND THE HOLY SCRIPTURES ARE MOST NECESSARY TO A FAITHFUL SOUL

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE

O SWEETEST Lord Jesus, how great sweetness is that of a devout soul feasting with Thee in Thy banquet, in which there is no other meat set before her to be eaten but Thyself, her only Beloved, and most to be desired above all the desires of her heart!

And to me, indeed, it would be delightful, from my inmost affection, to pour out tears in Thy presence, and with loving Magdalen to wash Thy feet with my tears.

But where is this devotion, where is this so plenteous effusion of holy tears?

Of a truth, in Thy sight, and in that of Thy holy Angels, my whole heart ought to be inflamed and weep for joy.

For I have Thee in the Sacrament truly present, though hidden under another species.

2. For to behold Thee in Thine Own real and Divine brightness my eyes could not endure, neither could the whole world subsist in the splendor of the glory of Thy majesty.

In this, therefore, Thou consultest my weakness, that Thou concealest Thyself under the Sacrament.

I truly possess and adore Him Whom the Angels adore in Heaven; I as yet a while in faith, but they indeed by sight and without a veil.

I must be content with the light of true faith, and walk therein till the day of eternal brightness break forth, and the shadows of figures shall have passed a way.

But when that which is perfect shall come; the use of Sacraments shall cease; for the blessed in heavenly glory need not the sacramental medicine.

For they rejoice without end in the presence of God, beholding face to face His glory; and transformed from brightness to brightness of the abyss of God, they taste the Word of God made flesh, as He was from the beginning, and remaineth forever.

3. When I call to mind these wonders, every spiritual comfort whatsoever becomes even tedious to me: because as long as I behold not my Lord openly in His glory, I make no account of all that I see and hear in the world.

Thou art my witness, O God, that no one thing can comfort me, nor anything created give me rest, but only Thou, my God, Whom I desire to contemplate for eternity.

But this is not possible so long as I sojourn in this mortal life.

And therefore I must set myself to much patience, and submit myself to Thee in every desire.

For thus also Thy Saints, O Lord, who now exult with Thee in the kingdom of Heaven, during life awaited in faith and much patience the advent of Thy glory.

What they believed, I believe; what they hoped, I hoped for; and whither they are arrived, I trust that I also, through Thy grace, shall arrive.

In the meantime I will walk in faith, being strengthened by the examples of the Saints.

I shall have, moreover, for my consolation and a mirror of life, Thy holy Books, and above all these, Thy most holy Body for my special remedy and refuge.

4. For in this life I find there are two things especially necessary for me, without which this miserable life would be to me insupportable.

Whilst detained in the prison of this body, I acknowledge that I need two things, viz.: Food and light.

Thou hast, therefore, given to me, weak as I am, Thy Sacred Body for the nourishment of my soul and body, and Thou hast set Thy Word as a light to my feet.

Without these two I could not well live: for the Word of God is the light of my soul, and Thy Sacrament is the Bread of life.

These also may be called the two tables set on either side in the storehouse of Thy holy Church.

One is of the table of the holy altar, having the holy Bread—that is, the precious Body of Christ; the other is that of the Divine Law, containing holy doctrine, teaching a right faith, and leading most securely even to the interior of the veil, where is the Holy of Holies.

5. Thanks be to Thee, O Lord Jesus, Light of eternal Light, for the table of holy doctrine, which Thou hast ministered to us Thy servants, the Prophets and Apostles, and other teachers.

Thanks be to Thee, O Thou Creator and Redeemer of men, Who, to manifest to the whole world Thy love, hast prepared a great supper, wherein Thou hast set before us to be eaten, not the typical lamb, but Thy most sacred Body and Blood, rejoicing all the faithful with Thy holy Banquet, and inebriating them with the chalice of salvation, in which are all the delights of Paradise; and the holy Angels do feast with us, but with a more happy sweetness.

6. Oh, how great and honorable is the office of priests, to whom it is given to consecrate with sacred words the Lord of Majesty, to bless Him with their lips, to hold Him with their hands, to receive Him with their own mouths, and to administer Him to others!

Oh, how clean ought to be the hands, how pure the mouth, how holy the body, how immaculate the heart of the priest, into whom the Author of Purity so often enters!

From the mouth of a priest nothing but what is holy, no word but what is becoming and profitable, ought to proceed, who so often receiveth the Sacrament of Christ.

7. Simple and chaste should be those eyes which are accustomed to behold the Body of Christ.

Pure and lifted up to Heaven should be the hands which are used to handle the Creator of Heaven and earth.

Unto priests especially it is said in the Law: Be ye holy; for I, the Lord your God, am holy.

8. Let Thy grace, O God omnipotent, assist us, that we, who have undertaken the sacerdotal office, may be enabled to serve Thee worthily and

devoutly, in all purity, and with a good conscience.

And if we cannot live in so great innocence of life as we ought, grant us still duly to bewail the sins we have committed, and in the spirit of humility, and the purpose of a good will, to serve Thee more fervently for the future.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

The reading of pious books is a means of attaining the dispositions of Communion; and of preserving the fruit thereof in the soul.

GOD therefore gave the Israelites in the desert a pillar of fire to light and to guide them, and manna to support them in their journey to the promised land. In like manner has our Lord given us pious books to enlighten us, and the adorable Sacrament of His Body and Blood to nourish us in our way to Heaven. We should, therefore, make frequent use of both, in order to arrive there; of good books that we may not go astray, and of the Divine Eucharist that we may be strengthened to walk in that narrow path which leads to Paradise.

On this account it is proper, on the eve and on the day of Communion, to read some pious book, which treats of the Blessed Sacrament, in order to keep up in the soul that spirit of fervor, fidelity, and love towards God, and that sacred fire which Jesus Christ Himself comes to enkindle within us. That all-Divine discourse which Jesus made to His Apostles after the institution of the Most Holy Sacrament, may be read; but we should read the Scriptures in those sentiments in which the Holy Spirit composed them; we should read them with that faith, respect, and docility which they merit, and with which they inspire those who read them fervently and in a proper manner: we should read them with all the attention due to the presence of God, with an ardent desire to profit by them and to derive nourishment from them, confidently having recourse to the Holy Spirit, Who dictated them.

PRAYER

O MY Savior! Who hast so abundantly provided us with pious books, to serve us as a bright, shining light, to withdraw or to preserve us from those wanderings which are so dangerous to our souls, enlighten our minds with the truths we read, and move our hearts to practice them. Grant that they may be our consolation in trouble, our support in difficulties, and the rule of

our whole conduct. But grant also, O Word Incarnate, that we may hear Thy voice speaking to our hearts, when we read Thy Gospel with our lips, and that through the respect we owe to Thy Divine Word, we may endeavor to put it in practice on those occasions when we have need of it: since it is not less necessary to practice the holy maxims of the Gospel, than it is to believe them. Amen.

CHAPTER 12

WITH HOW GREAT DILIGENCE HE WHO IS TO COMMUNICATE OUGHT TO PREPARE HIMSELF FOR CHRIST

THE VOICE OF THE BELOVED

I AM the Lover of purity and the Giver of all sanctity.

I seek a pure heart, and there is the place of My rest.

Make ready for Me a large upper room furnished, and I will eat the Pasch with thee, together with My disciples.

If thou wilt have Me to come to thee and remain with thee, purge out the old leaven, and make clean the habitation of thy heart. Shut out the whole world and all the tumult of vices; sit as a sparrow solitary on the housetop, and think of thine excesses in the bitterness of thy soul.

For every lover prepareth a place the best and most beautiful for her dearly beloved; since hereby is known the affection of the person entertaining the beloved.

2. Know, nevertheless, that thou canst not satisfy for this preparation, by the merit of any action of thine, even shouldst thou prepare thyself thus for a whole year together, so as to think of nothing else.

But it is of My mere goodness and grace that thou art suffered to come to My table; as if a beggar should be invited to the banquet of a rich man, and he had nothing else to return him for his benefits but to humble himself and give him thanks.

Do, therefore, what lieth in thee, and do it diligently; not out of custom nor from necessity; but with fear, reverence, and affection, receive the Body of thy beloved Lord God, Who vouchsafeth to come to thee.

I am He Who hath invited thee; I have commanded it to be done; I will supply what is wanting to thee; come and receive Me.

3. When I bestow the grace of devotion, give thanks to thy God, not that thou art worthy, but because I have had compassion on thee.

If thou hast not devotion, but rather findest thyself dry, persist in prayer, sigh and knock; nor desist until thou deservest to receive some crumb or drop of saving grace.

Thou hast need of Me, not I of thee. Neither dost thou come to sanctify Me but I come to sanctify and improve thee.

Thou comest that thou mayst be sanctified by Me and united to Me; that thou mayst receive new grace, and be incited anew to amendment.

Neglect not this grace, but prepare thy heart with all diligence, and bring in thither to thee thy Beloved.

4. But thou oughtest not only to prepare thyself for devotion before Communion, but also carefully to keep thyself therein after the reception of the Sacrament. Neither is watchfulness less required after, than a devout preparation before; for strict guardianship afterwards is the best preparation for again obtaining a greater grace.

For a person is rendered much indisposed for this, if he personally turn himself too eagerly after exterior consolation.

Beware of much talk; remain in secret and enjoy thy God; for thou hast Him Whom all the world cannot take from thee.

I am He to Whom thou oughtest to give thy whole self; so that henceforth thou mayst live not in thyself, but in Me, and free from all solicitude.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

That it is necessary to nourish ourselves with the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ.

As the Blessed Eucharist is a Sacrament in which we find a heaven upon earth, and God Himself in us, as it is the greatest prodigy of God's love for man; so to profit by it we must endeavor to approach it with a lively faith, a firm hope, and an ardent love of Jesus Christ, trusting that He will supply our deficiency in these three virtues, and increase them within us in proportion as we communicate frequently, and as far as we are able, worthily. Hence those who would stay away from the Holy Communion

because they do not sensibly experience the holy impression of these virtues, nor an ardent desire to receive Jesus Christ, should not on this account deprive themselves of it; because it is necessary to enable them to practice the virtues of Christianity, and the duties of their state of life; they should, therefore, receive their blessed Savior on account of the need they have of Him.

The holy Martyrs of the primitive Church, before they appeared at the tribunals of their judges, there to confess their faith, were accustomed to receive the Holy Communion; for they did not think themselves, says St. Cyprian, in a fit state without it, or as having sufficient strength to undergo the torments of Martyrdom. In like manner should Christians, in order to fight against their passions, and to resist the temptations of the devil, clothe and nourish themselves with the virtue of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ; without which they must be in danger of falling and of being lost.

PRAYER

O JESUS, the Bread of Angels! The Divine and necessary nourishment of my soul! what should I be without Thee? How truly might I exclaim with the Psalmist: "I am smitten like grass and my heart is withered because I forgot to eat my bread?" Thou hast said in the Gospel that if Thou shouldst suffer the people, who had followed Thee into the desert, to return fasting to their homes, they would faint in the way. This evil would surely befall me, my Savior, were I not to be nourished with Thy Body and Blood. Weak as I am of myself, and becoming still weaker from the neglect of that Divine food which is my strength and my spiritual life, I should soon grow feeble and unequal to contend with my passions.

How, O Jesus, wilt Thou be the God of my heart, and my portion for eternity, if Thou dost not now take possession of it in the Holy Communion, and commence within it that holy alliance, which Thou desirest to perfect in heaven? Come then, my Savior, come to me often, that I may never be separated from Thee. Amen.

CHAPTER 13

THAT A DEVOUT SOUL OUGHT TO DESIRE, WITH THE WHOLE HEART, TO BE UNITED TO CHRIST IN THIS SACRAMENT

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE

WHO will give me, O Lord, to find Thee alone, to open my whole heart to Thee, and enjoy Thee as my soul desireth, and that no one may henceforth despise me, nor anything created move or regard me, but that Thou alone mayst speak to me, and I to Thee, as the beloved is wont to speak to his beloved, and a friend to be entertained with a friend.

For this I pray, this I desire, that I may be wholly united to Thee, and that I may withdraw my heart from all things created; and by Holy Communion, and often celebrating, I may more and more learn to relish things heavenly and eternal.

Ah, Lord God, when shall I be wholly united to, and absorbed in Thee, and altogether unmindful of myself?

Thou in me, and I in Thee; and thus grant us both equally to continue in one.

2. Verily, Thou art my Beloved, the choicest among thousands, in Whom my soul is well pleased to dwell all the days of its life.

Verily, Thou art my Peace-maker, in Whom is sovereign peace and true rest; and out of Whom is labor and sorrow and infinite misery.

Thou art in truth a hidden God, and Thy counsel is not with the wicked, but Thy conversation is with the humble and the simple.

Oh, how sweet, O Lord, is Thy Spirit, Who, to show Thy sweetness towards Thy children, vouchsafest to refresh them with that most delicious Bread which cometh down from Heaven!

Truly, no other nation is there so great, that hath its gods so nigh to it, as Thou, our God, art present to all Thy faithful; to whom for their daily solace, and for raising up their hearts to Heaven, Thou givest Thyself to be eaten and enjoyed.

3. For what other nation is there so distinguished as the Christian people?

Or what creature under Heaven so beloved as a devout soul to whom God cometh, that He may feed it with His Own glorious flesh? O unspeakable grace! O wonderful condescension!

O boundless love bestowed exclusively on man!

But what shall I render to the Lord for this grace, for charity so remarkable?

There is not anything that I can present to Him more acceptable than to give up my heart entirely to God, and closely unite it to Him.

Then all that is within me shall rejoice exceedingly, when my soul shall have been perfectly united to its God; then will He say to me: If thou wilt be with Me, I will be with thee; and I will answer Him: Vouchsafe, O Lord, to remain with me, I will willingly be with Thee.

This is my whole desire, that my heart may be united to Thee.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

Of the ends for which Jesus Christ is present upon our altars, and the pious dispositions with which we should visit the Blessed Sacrament, and assist at Mass and Benediction.

THE Son of God remains upon our altars not only during Mass, but likewise a other times; first, to hear and favorably to receive our prayers, and to continue the same mediation between God and man which He exercised upon the Cross; secondly, to receive our visits, our homage, and adorations; hence, those Christians who visit Him seldom, coldly, through custom, or with indifference, are highly blamable for thus appearing before their God, their Savior, and their Judge, without either reverence, love, or fear; thirdly, to console us under afflictions, to support us in difficulties, and to resolve and dissipate our doubts, according to what is written: “Let us go

to the Son of Joseph, and He will console us;” [“Is not this Jesus, the Son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?” (St. John, vi, 42).] and as a Prophet said to a prince, who sent to consult a false god: “Is it because there is no God in Israel?” fourthly, to be our nourishment during life, and our Viaticum at the hour of death.

How should a Christian who has recourse to Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament with assiduity, respect, and gratitude, as to his King, his God, and his Savior, who never omits hearing Mass but from necessity, and when he assists at it, or at Benediction, endeavors to attend with a spirit of religion, that he may depart affected, converted, and a better man—how, I say, should a Christian who is faithful in the discharge of all pious duties towards Jesus Christ immolated for him on the altar, repose his confident hope in His bounty and mercies, both in life and in death? Will not, however, the Son of God have reason one day to reproach multitudes of Christians who either neglect to visit Him in the Most Holy Sacrament, or do so with very little devotion; will He not have reason to reproach them with their irreverence and want of faith, saying to them: “There hath stood One in the midst of you Whom ye knew not”? You have neglected to know and visit God, “Who was in the midst of you.” In vain have I performed prodigies of power, wisdom, and bounty in the Blessed Eucharist, that I might gain your hearts; you would not interrupt your employments, nor even your pleasure to come and pay Me your homage. To answer the ends therefore for which Jesus Christ is always present in the Most Holy Sacrament, we should visit Him, hear Mass, and attend at Benediction, with all the respect and submission of courtiers before their king, with the recollection and fervor of Angels before their God, with the humble fear of criminals before their judge, and with the confidence and love of children before their father.

PRAYER

Which may be recited either during Mass or at the Benediction, or when visiting the Blessed Sacrament.

I. I ADORE Thee, O Sovereign Majesty, Who residest upon our altars, to receive our homage, and dost there annihilate and immolate Thyself in honor of Thine Eternal Father, to come and reign in our hearts. I profoundly

pay Thee all the homage due to a God Who is to decide my eternal doom. I prostrate myself before Thee. I desire to join in the profound adorations of the Seraphim who assist around the altar, and I beseech Thee to accept their recollection and their love to supply the wanderings of my mind, and the indifference of my heart.

II. Penetrated with sorrow and confusion for the irreverences and indecencies which I have dared to commit in Thy presence, and for those also of all other Christians. I most humbly crave pardon for them, and am resolved to make amends for them, by appearing before Thee with all that modesty, all that reserve, all that respect, and all that spirit of religion with which I ought to present myself before Thee. I desire to satisfy Thy justice for all the outrages Thou hast received from impious libertines and heretics in the Most Holy Sacrament. Forgive them, O Lord, for they know Thee not; and cause me to suffer the temporal punishment which they have deserved, rather than abandon and punish them forever.

Grant, O adorable Victim of Thy love and of our salvation, grant that faith may immolate my mind, charity consecrate my heart, and religion sacrifice my whole being to Thee; and that so long as I shall be in Thy house, my eyes may behold only Thee, my heart overflow with Thy love, and my tongue proclaim Thy praise in prayer and supplication.

III. While the Angels lie prostrate before Thee, O great God, and, struck with humble fear, fervently pay Thee their tribute of profound respect and ardent love, shall we mortals, who are the works of Thy hands and the price of Thy Blood, appear in Thy presence with wandering eyes and dissipated minds, with cold and indifferent hearts, without addressing Thee, and almost without thinking of Thee? O my Savior, suffer me not to be thus wanting in the respect and love which I owe to Thy greatness, and which Thou dost so much the more deserve as Thou dost the more humble Thyself for the love of me.

IV. Inspire me with the sentiments of the publican, who dared not lift up his eyes towards God, penetrated with sorrow and confusion for his sins, and of the prodigal son, when he returned to his father's house; and grant that, like them, I may be restored, through Thy bounty and my sorrow, to Thy grace and favor.

V. O my soul, behold thy God Who died for thee, and of Whose death thou wert the cause; how canst thou refrain from testifying thy love and

gratitude towards Him? O my heart! be thou before Jesus Christ like the lamp which burns before Him, and be thou in like manner consumed in His presence. No, I desire not to depart from before Thee, my Savior, without being truly converted and entirely Thine. Amen.

CHAPTER 14

OF THE ARDENT DESIRE OF SOME DEVOUT PERSONS TOWARDS THE BODY OF CHRIST

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE

AH, how great is the multitude of Thy sweetness, O Lord, which Thou hast hidden for them that fear Thee!

When I call to mind some persons devout to Thy Sacrament, O Lord, who approach with the greatest devotion and affection, then I am often confounded within myself, and blush that I approach so tepidly and coldly to Thine altar, and to the table of Holy Communion; that I remain so dry and without affection of heart; that I am not wholly set on fire in Thy presence, O my God, nor so vehemently drawn onwards and affected, as many devout persons have been, who, from excessive desire of Communion and a sensible love in their hearts were unable to contain themselves from weeping; but with the mouth, both of their heart as well as of their body, did they, from the very marrow of their soul pant after Thee, O Lord, the Living Fountain; and being otherwise able either to delay or satisfy their hunger, unless by receiving Thy Body with all joy and spiritual avidity.

2. Oh, truly the ardent faith of these persons is a demonstrative existing argument of Thy sacred presence!

For they truly know their Lord in the breaking of bread, whose heart burneth, so mightily within them, from Jesus walking with them.

Alas, far from me too often is such affection and devotion, such vehement love and ardor.

Be Thou merciful to me, O good Jesus, sweet and gracious, and grant Thy poor mendicant to feel, sometimes at least, in the sacred Communion some little of the cordial affection of Thy love, that my faith may be more strengthened, my hope in Thy goodness increased; and that charity, once perfectly enkindled, and having tasted the manna of Heaven, may never die away.

3. Powerful, indeed, is Thy mercy to give me also the desired grace, and in Thy great clemency, when the time of Thy good pleasure arrives, to visit me with the spirit of fervor.

For though I burn not with so great desire as Thy specially devout servants, yet, by Thy grace, I have a desire of this same greatly inflamed desire, praying and wishing that I may be made partaker with all such fervent lovers and be numbered in their holy company.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

How to make a good Spiritual Communion.

SPIRITUAL Communion, which the Council of Trent approves of, and so strongly advises and commends as a substitute for the sacramental and corporal reception of Jesus Christ, may be made at all times and in all places, whether we are in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament or not. We may make it every hour, or after a Hail Mary, said in honor of the Blessed Virgin, Mother of God, uniting ourselves to those holy dispositions with which she conceived Jesus Christ in her chaste womb. We should bring our minds to a respectful remembrance of Jesus Christ in the Most Holy Sacrament; we should there adore Him, and direct our hearts towards Him, as Daniel did towards the Temple; we should give all to Him, and desire to receive Him sacramentally; as, however, we cannot enjoy that happiness, not being prepared, we should pray to Him for the communication of His holy Spirit, in place of His Sacred Body and Blood.

But the most proper time for making a good spiritual Communion, is when we assist at Mass, at the time of the priest's Communion. Then a Christian, animated with a lively and actual faith in the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, and with an ardent desire of being intimately united to Him, should evince such dispositions by humbling himself profoundly in His presence; and, esteeming himself unworthy of

really receiving Him, implore Him to come and dwell in his mind by faith, and in his heart by love and gratitude for His goodness, that so he may say with the Apostle: "I live, now not ,but Christ liveth in me."

PRAYER

O MOST amiable Saviour, Who wast the perpetual object and reigning desire of the ancient Patriarchs and Prophets, and of all the Saints of the Old Testament, who sighed incessantly for Thine incarnation, come into my soul, which burns with the desire of receiving Thee, and of being united to Thee, as the Author of my salvation, and the Source of all good. Come and destroy within me the tyranny of sin and self-love, and establish there the reign of Thy grace and charity. I have reason to judge myself unworthy of really partaking of Thy Body and Blood, but in Thy mercy grant me to partake of Thy Spirit, and of Thy virtues, through the desire I have of receiving Thee in the Most Holy Sacrament.

No, my Jesus, I cannot leave Thee, nor live without Thee: Thou only canst satisfy my heart and make me happy. O ye Seraphim! who ardently desire to be sacramentally united to Jesus Christ, yet cannot, I unite myself to the ardor and purity of your desires, to be united to the same God Whom with me you adore upon the altar. But, O Lord, do Thou come and purify my heart from all attachment to myself or to creatures, my heart which was made but to love and to possess Thee. Thou alone canst satisfy it, and all that is not Thee is as nothing. O amiable God! O loving God! can I know Thee and not love Thee, and love Thee and not burn with desire to receive Thee on earth, and to see and to possess Thee forever in Heaven! Amen.

CHAPTER 15

THE GRACE OF DEVOTION IS ACQUIRED BY HUMILITY AND SELF- ABNEGATION

THE VOICE OF THE BELOVED

THOU oughtest to seek the grace of devotion earnestly, to ask it longingly, to wait for it patiently and confidently, to receive it thankfully, to keep it humbly, to work with it diligently, and to commit to God the time and manner of this heavenly visitation, until He come unto thee.

Thou oughtest especially to humble thyself when thou feelest inwardly little or no devotion; and yet not to be too much dejected, nor to grieve inordinately.

God often giveth in one short moment what He hath for a long time denied.

He giveth sometimes in the end that which at the beginning of prayer He deferred to grant.

2. If grace were always immediately given, and ever present at our will, it would scarcely be supportable to weak man.

Therefore, the grace of devotion must be awaited with a good hope and humble patience.

Still impute it to thyself and to thy sins when it is not given, or when also it is secretly taken away.

A trifling matter is it sometimes that hindereth or hideth grace; if, indeed, that may be called trifling, and not rather important, which hindereth so great a good. But if thou wilt remove this thing, small or great as it may be, and perfectly overcome it, it shall be as thou seekest.

3. For as soon as thou hast delivered thyself up to God with thy whole heart, and neither seekest this nor that for thine own pleasure, or will, but wholly placest thyself in Him, thou shalt find thyself united to Him and at peace; for nothing will be so grateful to thee, and please thee so much, as the good pleasure of the Divine will.

Whosoever, therefore, with simplicity of heart shall raise up his intention to God, and disengage himself from all inordinate love or dislike of any created being, he shall be the most apt to receive grace, and worthy of the gift of devotion.

For the Lord bestoweth His benediction there where He findeth vessels empty.

And the more perfectly one forsaketh the things below, and the more he dies to himself by contempt of himself, the more speedily grace cometh, entereth in more plentifully, and the higher it elevateth a heart that is free.

4. Then shall he see and abound, and shall admire, and his heart shall be enlarged within him, because the hand of the Lord is with him, and he hath put himself wholly into His hand, even forever.

Behold, thus shall the man be blessed who seeketh God with his whole heart, and taketh not his soul in vain.

Such a one, in receiving the Holy Eucharist, obtaineth the great grace of divine union; because he doth not regard his own devotion and consolation, but above all devotion and consolation he regardeth the honor and glory of God.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

How we are to dispose ourselves to receive the grace of the Holy Communion, that we may profit by it.

THE end of the Holy Eucharist is to unite us intimately to Jesus Christ, and to form in our souls a moral incarnation of His Spirit and His virtues; hence the holy Fathers call this adorable Sacrament an extension of the incarnation; it is to perpetuate the reign of His grace and love within us, and to enable us always to live a Divine and supernatural life in and by Him. Thus the grace which the Holy Communion produces in us, is conformable to the end for which it was instituted; and is agreeable to what Jesus Christ says of it in the Gospel; for, first, it causes us to remain in Him, forming

and imprinting in our souls the character of His virtues, as a seal makes its impression upon the wax to which it is applied; secondly, it makes us live by Him and for Him, that is, act only to please Him and by the influence of His love; thirdly, it enables us to live always a life of grace. Thus the grace which Jesus Christ communicates to us in the Holy Communion is to establish Himself in us, to make us act in all things and live only in Him and for Him, and to give us eternal life. We should dispose ourselves to receive and profit by this grace and these three effects of a good Communion; first, by separating ourselves from all willful sin, and the affection for it; secondly, by renouncing, and dying incessantly to ourselves; thirdly, by being ever faithful to the grace of God, and in the exercise of His love.

PRAYER

I. WHAT confusion for me, O Jesus, to have communicated so often, and to have profited so little by my Communions; to have been so frequently nourished with God, and to have lived always as man, an idle and sensual life! Pardon, my Savior, pardon me the evil dispositions with which I have approached the Holy Communion, pardon me for having had so often a dissipated mind, a heart attached to self love, and to the world, and for having done so little to acquire the dispositions for a good Communion, to return Thee thanks after having received it and to reap the fruit of it, which is the re-establishment of myself in fidelity and fervor.

II. How much reason have I to fear, O my Savior, that Thou wilt one day reproach me with the unfruitfulness of my Communion! But ought I less to dread Thy just reproach for neglecting to dispose myself for frequent and worthy Communion? How I fear lest I shall be condemned for my sloth, which has kept me away from the holy table, and caused me to lose so many Communions to which Thou wouldst have attached the grace of my conversion.

III. I will therefore from henceforth dispose myself for worthy Communion by detachment from sin and the occasions of it, and by interior acts of those virtues which I ought to exercise before, during and after the Holy Communion, and I will also spare no pains to profit by my Communions, by endeavoring to watch over myself, to avoid all willful

faults, to do all with a view to please Thee, to be faithful in my religious exercises, and to be courageous in restraining and conquering myself; for these are the true fruits of a good Communion. Grant me grace to execute what now, by Thy grace, Thou dost inspire me to resolve. Amen.

CHAPTER 16

THAT WE OUGHT TO LAY OPEN OUR NECESSITIES TO CHRIST, AND CRAVE HIS GRACE

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE

O MOST sweet and most loving Lord, Whom I now desire with all devotion to receive, Thou knowest my infirmity and the necessity which I endure; under how great evils and vices I lie prostrate; how often I am oppressed, tempted, troubled, and defiled.

To Thee do I come for remedy, to Thee do I pray for consolation and relief; I speak to Him Who knoweth all things, to Whom my whole interior is manifest, and Who alone can perfectly console and assist me.

Thou knowest what good things I stand most in need of, and how poor I am in virtues.

2. Behold, I stand before Thee poor and naked, begging grace and imploring mercy.

Feed Thy hungry beggar, inflame my coldness with the fire of Thy love, enlighten my blindness with the brightness of Thy presence.

Turn for me all earthly things into bitterness, all things grievous and adverse into patience, and all low and created things into contempt and oblivion.

Raise up my heart to Thee into Heaven, and suffer me not to wander upon earth.

Mayst Thou alone be delightful to me henceforth and forevermore.

For thou only art my meat and drink, my love and my joy, my sweetness and my whole good.

3. Oh, that with Thy presence Thou wouldst totally inflame, consume, and transform me into Thyself, that I may be made one spirit with Thee by the grace of internal union, and by the melting of ardent love!

Suffer me not to go from Thee hungry and dry; but deal with me in Thy mercy, as Thou hast often dealt so wonderfully with Thy Saints.

What marvel if I should be wholly set on fire by Thee, and should die to myself, since Thou art a fire always burning and never failing, a love purifying hearts and enlightening the understanding!

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

For this and the next chapter.

I. THE Son of God, after having taught us by His Word, shown us by His example, and merited for us by His grace, the necessary and essential virtues for Christian salvation, would institute the adorable Sacrament of the Eucharist, to come Himself and imprint them in our hearts. Of these Christian virtues, humility is the first, of which He gives us a splendid example in the Most Holy Sacrament; for He is there concealed, annihilated, and unknown to sense. During His mortal life, the perfections of His Divinity only were concealed, and, as it were, annihilated in His humanity; but in the Blessed Sacrament His humanity also lies hid, and nothing appears of a Man-God but what is seen by the eyes of faith. Here we learn how we ought to live in this world, in imitation of the humility and annihilation of Jesus Christ in the Most Holy Sacrament; first, to love a concealed and abject life; secondly, to fly from praise, esteem, and honor, and to welcome contempt as due to such sinners as ourselves; thirdly, to endeavor to be good and virtuous, without wishing to display our virtue or to perform our actions for the sake of being seen and esteemed by men, but solely to please God; fourthly, to be persuaded that man cannot honor God in any way so effectually as by abasing and humbling himself before Him; fifthly, to yield to hasty persons for the sake of peace; sixthly, never to act from human respect, but from a reverential fear of God; seventhly, never to speak well of ourselves nor ill of others.

II. The Son of God gives us in the Holy Eucharist an example of perfect obedience and of patience equal to all the outrages which He there receives, by the exact, continual, and miraculous obedience which He pays to the

priest, immediately descending upon the altar when the words of consecration are pronounced, and remaining there until man receives Him into his breast! O great God of independence and sovereignty of what a subject of confusion for us, that although Thou art God, Thou dost nevertheless obey man without delay, while man refuses or defers to obey Thee.

I will henceforth, O my Savior, in honor and imitation of Thy perfect obedience in the Most Holy Sacrament, promptly, generously, and constantly obey whatever Thou shalt ordain by Thine inspirations, by my superiors, and by the knowledge of my duties.

III. Jesus Christ teaches and inspires us with patience by His practice of it in the Holy Eucharist, in which He is an object of contempt to some, of neglect to others, and of indifference to many, who are but little devoted to God, much to the world, and wholly to themselves; in which He beholds Himself exposed to the unworthy or fruitless Communions of so many, whose lives are either decidedly criminal from being spent in the habit and occasion of mortal sin, or, at least, are of no avail to salvation. Nevertheless He suffers all these outrages with invincible patience, and He suffers them thus, to teach and to induce us to suffer contradictions and injuries in like manner.

IV. O my Jesus, the Victim of our salvation and of our sins! Why should we daily renew by our irreverence, dissipation, and indevotion, those outrages Thou didst receive when dying on the Cross, and renew them even in that state in which Thou art pleased to continue that all-atoning sacrifice? Pardon, O Jesus, pardon the insensibility, coldness, and indevotion with which we have approached the Holy Communion; forgive us for not having always followed the injunction which Thou givest us in the Gospel, of being reconciled to all mankind, before we present ourselves at the foot of Thy altar. Pardon also our impatience and the sallies of passion, which our Communions have not corrected in us, because we have not profited by them! Suffer not our tongues, which become the resting-places of Thy sacred Body, and which are so often purpled with Thy Blood, to be employed as the instruments of our anger and maledictions. O Lord, Who during Thy mortal life, didst heal the most incurable diseases, arrest, I beseech Thee, the impetuosity of my tongue. Yes, my Savior, that I may reap advantage from my Communions, I will never speak when my heart is

moved, but sacrifice my utterance to Thee, Who, for my sake, didst sacrifice even the last drop of Thy sacred Blood.

PRAYER

To obtain the fruit of a good Communion.

GIVE, O Jesus, to all who approach Thee in the Holy Communion, a constant courage to conquer themselves, an exact fidelity in corresponding with Thy graces, a restraint upon their tongue, a recollection of mind, and the plenitude of Thy love in their hearts. For Thy honor and glory, O Divine Savior, subject us to Thy dominion, and immolate us to Thy greatness. Suffer not our hearts, which are the conquest of Thy grace, evermore to be separated from Thee.

Be Thou the ruler of our passions, and the God of our souls; and grant that when we communicate, and after Communion, we may establish within us the reign of Thy sovereignty by our submission, the reign of Thy bounty by our confidence, and the reign of Thy grace by our fidelity. Amen.

CHAPTER 17

OF AN ARDENT LOVE AND VEHEMENT DESIRE TO RECEIVE CHRIST

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE

WITH great devotion and ardent love, with all affection and fervor of heart, I desire to receive Thee, O Lord, as many Saints and devout persons, who were most pleasing to Thee in holiness of life and in the most burning devotion, have desired Thee when they communicated.

O my God, Eternal Love, my whole good and never-ending happiness, I desire to receive Thee with the most vehement desire and most worthy reverence that any of the Saints have ever had, or could experience.

2. And although I am unworthy to possess all those sentiments of devotion, nevertheless I offer Thee the whole affection of my heart, as though I alone had all those highly-pleasing and inflamed desires.

Yet whatever a pious mind can conceive and desire, all these with the greatest reverence and most inward fervor I present and offer Thee.

I desire to reserve nothing for myself, but freely and most willingly to immolate to Thee myself and all that is mine.

O Lord my God, my Creator and Redeemer, I desire to receive Thee this day with such affection, reverence, praise, and honor, with such gratitude, worthiness, and love, with such faith, hope, and purity, as Thy most holy Mother, the glorious Virgin Mary, received and desired Thee, when, to the Angel announcing to her the mystery of the Incarnation, she humbly and devoutly answered: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to Thy word."

3. And as Thy blessed precursor, the most excellent amongst the Saints, John the Baptist, in Thy presence rejoicing, leapt through joy of the Holy Ghost whilst he was yet enclosed in his mother's womb; and afterwards seeing Jesus walking among men, humbling himself exceedingly, with devout affection, said: "The friend of the Bridegroom, who standeth and heareth Him, rejoiceth with Joy for the voice of the Bridegroom;" so I also wish to be inflamed with great and holy desires, and to present myself to Thee from my whole heart.

Wherefore I here offer and present to Thee the joys of all devout hearts, their ardent affections, their ecstasies, supernatural illuminations, and heavenly visions; together with all the virtues and praises that are or shall be celebrated by all creatures in Heaven and earth, for myself and all such as have been recommended to my prayers; and thus by all Thou mayst be worthily praised and glorified forever.

4. Receive my vows O Lord my God, and my desires of infinite praise and boundless blessing, which, according to the multitude of Thine unspeakable greatness, are most justly due to Thee.

These I render, and desire to render Thee every day and every moment of time; and I invite and entreat all the Heavenly Spirits, and all the Faithful, by prayers and affections, to render with me thanksgiving and praise.

5. Let all peoples, tribes, and tongues praise Thee, and magnify Thy holy and most sweet Name, with the highest jubilation and ardent devotion.

And may all, whoever reverently and devoutly celebrate Thy most high Sacrament, and receive it with full faith, at Thy hands deserve to find grace and mercy, and humbly to pray for me, a sinner.

And when they shall have obtained their wished-for devotion and blissful union, and shall retire from Thy sacred heavenly table fully comforted and wonderfully refreshed, let them vouchsafe to remember me, a poor creature.

Practical Reflections and Prayer as in the preceding chapter.

CHAPTER 18

THAT A MAN SHOULD NOT BE A CURIOUS SEARCHER INTO THIS SACRAMENT, BUT A HUMBLE FOLLOWER OF CHRIST, SUBMITTING HIS SENSE TO HOLY FAITH

THE VOICE OF THE BELOVED

THOU must beware of curious and useless scrutiny into this most profound Sacrament, if thou wouldst not sink into the depth of doubt.

He that is a searcher of majesty shall be overwhelmed by glory.

God is able to effect more than man is able to understand.

A pious and humble inquiry after truth is permitted, as of one, always prepared to be instructed, who studieth to walk in the sound doctrine of the Fathers.

2. Blessed is that simplicity which leaveth the difficult paths of questionings, and goeth on in the plain and sure path of God's Commandments.

Many have lost devotion, whilst they would search into lofty matters.

It is faith and an upright life that are required of thee; not the loftiness of intellect, nor diving deep into the mysteries of God.

If thou dost neither understand nor comprehend those things which are beneath thee, how mayst thou comprehend such as are above thee?

Submit thyself to God, and humble thy sense to faith, and the light of knowledge shall be given thee, according as shall be advantageous and necessary for thee.

3. Some are grievously tempted concerning faith and the Sacrament; but this is not to be imputed to them; but rather to the enemy.

Be not too anxious, nor stop to dispute with thy thoughts, nor answer doubts which the devil suggests; but believe the words of God, believe His Saints and Prophets, and the wicked enemy will fly from thee.

It is often very profitable that the servant of God should suffer such things.

For the devil tempteth not unbelievers and sinners, whom he already surely possesseth ; but the faithful and devout he tempteth and molesteth in many ways.

4. Go forward, therefore, with a simple and undoubting faith, and with lowly reverence approach the Sacrament; and whatsoever thou art not able to understand, securely commit to God the omnipotent.

God doth not deceive thee; but he is deceived who trusteth too much to himself.

God walketh with the simple, revealeth Himself to the humble, and giveth understanding to little ones; He discloseth His meaning to pure minds, and hideth His grace from the curious and proud.

Human reason is weak, and may be deceived; but true faith cannot be deceived.

5. All reason and natural investigation ought to follow faith, and not precede or infringe upon it.

For faith and love are here most especially predominant, and operate by occult ways in the most holy and super excelling Sacrament.

God, the eternal and immense, and of power infinite, doth things great and inscrutable in heaven and in earth; and there is no searching out His wonderful works.

If the works of God were such, that they could easily be comprehended by human reason, they could neither be called wonderful nor unspeakable.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

Faith must triumph over our senses and reason, by our firmly believing in the Real Presence, and humbly receiving the Body and Blood of Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar.

I. TAKING it for granted that God can do more than man can comprehend; that human reason may be deceived, but that faith cannot; and that we are bound to believe Jesus Christ when He says to His Apostles: “This is My Body, which shall be delivered for you: this is My Blood, which shall be shed for you,” we must necessarily believe without hesitation the real presence of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ in the Most Holy Sacrament; without wishing to fathom the depth of this mystery, which is wholly incomprehensible to reason, and impenetrable to human understanding, our faith supplying the defects of our senses; and contenting ourselves with thinking that as God was able to accomplish it, and has declared to us that He has done so, we must endeavor only to believe, honor, and receive Jesus Christ in the adorable Eucharist.

II. What a happiness, thus to sacrifice in this mystery of faith, as indeed in all other mysteries, the light of human reason to the truth of God’s word, and the affection of our hearts to the infinite love evinced by our Redeemer in the institution and use of the Most Holy Sacrament: in which, as St. Bernard says, He is all love for us; in which, according to the Council of Trent, He replenishes our hearts with all the riches of love; but of a love infinitely liberal, which induces Him to give Himself entirely to us, and to be even prodigal of Himself; for it is, says the sacred text, in this Sacrament which He instituted at the close of His life, that He gives us the most tender and sensible marks of His love for us, by uniting Himself intimately to us, and us intimately to Himself, to take possession from henceforth of our hearts, and to give us a pledge of possessing Him for all eternity.

III. Such being the admirable designs of Jesus Christ in the Most Holy Sacrament, it is for us to endeavor to correspond with them by worthy and frequent use of it. A sincere and reverential faith, a Christian life of detachment from the world, a profound humility, a simple docility of belief, and an effectual obedience in refusing nothing required of us by Jesus Christ, when He descends into our souls in the Holy Eucharist, a dedication of our whole selves to the honor of His annihilated greatness, and in gratitude for the ardor of His love, is the whole He requires of us, and all we have to do to dispose ourselves in a proper manner to receive and to profit by this Holy Sacrament. But let us always remember that He does not demand from us as a disposition for Communion, that which is the effect of Communion, and that, provided we approach Him with a real desire of

being converted, evinced by a good confession, and by a firm hope that Jesus Christ will confirm us by His presence in His grace and love, we may with confidence frequently receive the Holy Communion, that we may obtain courage to conquer ourselves, fidelity in our exercises of piety, and perseverance in the grace and love of God, which are the real effects of frequent and worthy Communion.

PRAYER

To Jesus Christ, that He may in His bounty enable us to practice this book.

ALLOW me, O my Savior, to offer Thee, with the most profound reverence, these helps to the practice of this book of Thine imitation, which Thou hast inspired me to add to it, to teach and induce all Christians to apply themselves to know Thee, to love Thee, and to follow Thee, to unite themselves to the holy dispositions of Thy Heart in all Thy Mysteries, to practice the maxims of Thy Gospel, and to imitate Thy virtues: for it is in this, as Thou tell est us, that all the happiness and all the merits of a Christian life consist.

I beseech thee, O Holy Virgin, Mother of my God and Savior! to obtain this grace for me, and for all who shall read these helps to the practice of this book of the “Following of thy Son,” and procure for us, by thy powerful intercession, a good life, a holy death, and a happy eternity. Amen.

THE FOUNDERS OF THE NEW DEVOTION

BEING THE LIVES OF GERARD GROOTE
FLORENTIUS RADEWIN AND
THEIR FOLLOWERS

THOMAS A KEMPIS

E-BOOK ALSO AVAILABLE IN PAPERBACK.

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The appearance of à Kempis's "Lives of Gerard Groote and his Followers," in an English garb, should be hailed by Catholics with satisfaction. The translation has been very carefully revised by the Prior of Downside, Fr. Leo Almond, O.S.B., and naught will be found in it but what is edifying. I trust that the book will have a wide circulation, Presenting, as it does, one of the brightest Pages in the history of an age in which there is much that is sombre.

X GEORGE AMBROSE BURTON, Bishop of Clifton. November 7th, 1904. TO E. H. P.

Ὡδε ὑπομονὴ τῶν ἁγίων ἐστίν•

ὥδε οἱ τηροῦντες τὰς ἐντολὰς τοῦ θεοῦ

καὶ τὴν πίστιν Ἰησοῦ

CONTENTS

THE FOUNDERS OF THE NEW DEVOTION: BEING THE LIVES OF GERARD GROOTE
FLORENTIUS RADEWIN AND THEIR FOLLOWERS

PREFACE

INTRODUCTION

THE LIFE OF THE REVEREND MASTER GERARD THE GREAT COMMONLY CALLED
GROOTE

THE LIFE OF GERARD THE GREAT

PREFACE

CHAPTER I

Of the origin and interpretation of Gerard's name

CHAPTER II

Of his rapid progress at the University of Paris

CHAPTER III

How his conversion was revealed to a hermit in Cologne

CHAPTER IV

How he was drawn to God by the Carthusian

CHAPTER V

Of his change of garb and character

CHAPTER VI

How he separated himself from fellowship with worldlings

CHAPTER VII

Of his abstinence, and the shirt of hair which he wore

CHAPTER VIII

How, by the advice of the Monks, he began to preach the word of God

CHAPTER IX

Of his labours, and his patience toward his enemies

CHAPTER X

Of his journey to the parts about Brabant

CHAPTER XI

Of his austerity in food and clothing

CHAPTER XII

Of his devoutness in prayer and in hearing Holy things

CHAPTER XIII

Of his great love of reading the Holy Scriptures

CHAPTER XIV

Of the abundant fruit which he bore in the conversion of men

CHAPTER XV

Of the devout communities and monasteries which arose through him

CHAPTER XVI

Of his happy death and burial

CHAPTER XVII

Of the noble eulogy passed upon Gerard by a Cantor at Paris

CHAPTER XVIII

Of his public profession of faith, and of his delivering the true Gospel in his preaching

APPENDIX TO THE LIFE OF GERARD GROOTE

EPITAPHIUM VETUS ET INCONDITUM VENERABILIS MAGISTRI GERARDI MAGNI

THE LIFE OF THE REVERED FLORENTIUS, A DEVOUT PRIEST, AND VICAR OF THE CHURCH OF DEVENTER

THE LIFE OF FLORENTIUS

PREFACE

CHAPTER I

Of the humility of Christ which Florentius studied to imitate

CHAPTER II

Of the interpretation of the name Florentius and its three glorious meanings

CHAPTER III

Of the interpretation of his father's name Radewin

CHAPTER IV

Of his native land, and how he went to study at Prague

CHAPTER V

Of his honourable character in the world

CHAPTER VI

Of his conversion through the preaching of Master Gerard

CHAPTER VII

How he despised the life of the world and joined himself to Master Gerard

CHAPTER VIII

How Florentius himself, now fully converted, did convert many others

CHAPTER IX

Of the burdens that he bore, and the wrongs that he suffered

CHAPTER X

Of his promotion to the priesthood and the abasement of his humility

CHAPTER XI

How seldom he went out, and of his instructive demeanour as he stood in the Choir

CHAPTER XII

Of the simplicity of his garb

CHAPTER XIII

Of his humble service among the Brothers

CHAPTER XIV

How he laboured with his hands for the common good

CHAPTER XV

Of his compassion toward the poor, the sick, and the friendless

CHAPTER XVI

Of his feeding the poor, and washing beggars

CHAPTER XVII

Of his abstinence and the infirmities which came upon him by reason of his austerity

CHAPTER XVIII

How he often recovered by the aid of the prayers of the devout

CHAPTER XIX

How upon an Easter Even he was healed by a Vision of Angels

CHAPTER XX

Of one who fell into a well and was drawn out unhurt

CHAPTER XXI

Of the vision of the Rood which appeared over his house

CHAPTER XXII

Of his patience, gentleness, and love toward all men

CHAPTER XXIII

Of his devout exhortation to spiritual prayer

CHAPTER XXIV

Of his effectual preaching and his knowledge of the Scriptures

CHAPTER XXV

How he set a guard upon his tongue and avoided oaths

CHAPTER XXVI

Of three temptations that are full of peril to the devout

CHAPTER XXVII

Of his sending forth the Brothers to gather fruit in divers places

CHAPTER XXVIII

Of his happy passing from this world and his burial in the Church

CHAPTER XXIX

Of a vision which was seen after his death, and of the great glory which he attained

A LETTER AND CERTAIN NOTABLE SAYINGS OF FLORENTIUS

LIVES OF THE FOLLOWERS OF FATHER FLORENTIUS

LIVES OF THE FOLLOWERS OF FATHER FLORENTIUS

PREFACE

LIFE OF JOHN GRONDE

CHAPTER I

Of the first Congregation of Clerks in Deventer

CHAPTER II

Concerning John Gronde

LIFE OF JOHN BRINCKERINCK

LIFE OF LUBERT BERNER

LIFE OF HENRY BRUNE

THE LIFE OF GERARD OF ZUTPHEN

LIFE OF AMILIUS OF BUREN

LIFE OF JAMES OF VIANA

LIFE OF JOHN CACABUS

LIFE OF ARNOLD OF SCHOONHOVEN

THE FOUNDERS OF THE NEW
DEVOTION: BEING THE LIVES OF
GERARD GROOTE FLORENTIUS
RADEWIN AND THEIR FOLLOWERS

PREFACE

CONSIDERING the wide fame of Thomas à Kempis as the reputed author of “The Imitation of Christ” it is surprising that no English translation of the “Lives of Gerard Groote and his followers” has been published hitherto. The Brotherhood of the Common Life to which à Kempis belonged owed its foundation to Groote and his pupil Florentius, and since that Brotherhood is referred to by the author himself as “The New Devotion,” and Groote is called “Nostrae devotionis fundator,” I have thought myself justified in giving to this translation the title which it bears, although the *editio princeps* gives no general title to the Lives.

The version here presented does not claim to be savagely literal, but I hope that I have not misrepresented the author in any material point, and that the translation faithfully renders the meaning of the original Latin. In any case I have not intentionally distorted or omitted a single phrase.

An introductory chapter has been added, giving a brief and imperfect résumé of the conditions under which Groote and his followers lived, together with certain notes dealing with matters to which the text refers.

My cordial thanks are due to several friends who have assisted me, especially to the Rev. S. H. Gem, for many valuable suggestions and references, and to M. P. S. Allen for similar help. I am happy in having this opportunity of expressing my gratitude to the Very Reverend Leo Almond, Prior of Downside Abbey, who has been good enough to read my manuscript and to give me much information on technical points.

INTRODUCTION

THE period covered by the Lives of Gerard Groote and his followers is the hundred years which elapsed between 1340, the date of Groote's birth, and 1439, the year in which Henry Brune died. In order to understand the significance of the movement to which à Kempis has given the name of "The New Devotion," it is necessary briefly to consider the conditions which prevailed at the time when that movement was initiated and the difficulties with which its adherents had to contend.

At the time of Groote's birth the Low Countries were divided into a number of small principalities, each of which was governed by its own Sovereign: of these the most powerful were the Counts of Holland and the Prince Bishops of Utrecht, who as Motley says, "divided between them the Sovereignty of what afterwards became the United States of the Netherlands." By the death of William IV of Holland in 1355, that country was plunged into a whirlpool of civil discord which did not subside until 1437, when Philip of Burgundy, misnamed "The Good," obtained undisputed possession of the supreme power.

The Bishops of Utrecht, in addition to their spiritual authority, enjoyed a large amount of temporal power, and were for many centuries the most formidable of the opponents to the Counts of Holland. The Bishopric was founded by Charles Martell in the eighth century, that prince having rewarded the Anglo-Saxon monk, Willibrord, with large possessions in the neighbourhood of the town from which the See is named, in recognition of his labours on behalf of the Faith. Winfred or Bonifacius who succeeded, received further accessions of territory, and by his efforts and his martyr's death at Dokkum, Christianity was established yet more firmly in the Netherlands. The power of his successors, the later Bishops, gradually but continually increased, and since in earlier years the authority of these prelates was frequently exercised in the defence of the people against

oppression, it rested upon a foundation surer than any which could be laid by Royal Grant or Charter.

The district of Overijssel with which we are more immediately concerned, though it formed a portion of the dominions of the prince Bishops, enjoyed at this time a certain measure of independence, being administered by a council composed of representatives of the nobility and of the three cities, Deventer, Kempen and Zwolle. The Bishop, indeed, presided over this council, but he seems to have allowed to its members complete freedom of decision upon any points which arose, and to have waived his rights of interference even in cases concerning clerks who dwelt in the three towns above named (“*Belgii Confœderati Respub.*,” p. 254, Elzevir, 1630). But though the power of the Bishops had in earlier days afforded protection to the people, their government became more and more arbitrary and despotic, a result which was due to a variety of causes too complex to enumerate; certain points, however, must be borne in mind, of which perhaps the most important is the slight deference shown by these Bishops to their Spiritual Head. Some thirty-five years before our period begins, Clement V had removed the Papal Chair to Avignon, and thus he and his successors became unduly dependent upon the favour of the French Kings, and as a natural consequence the Papal authority was for the time greatly weakened. Of the Popes who reigned during the period under consideration the first five, namely, Benedict XII, Clement VI, Innocent VI, Urban V and Gregory XI, resided in France, but after the death of Gregory, the “Great Schism” broke out to still further relax the authority of the Holy See. It is impossible here to describe in detail the course of this unhappy feud, but since Groote is praised for his loyalty to Urban VI it is desirable to note the fact that the best authorities agree that the election of that Pontiff was regular, and that the action of the Cardinals who declared the election void was illegal. It should be remembered also that whereas the Popes named above were all of French nationality, Urban VI was an Italian, and that the Schism was due to political rather than to Religious considerations.

The election of Urban took place in 1378, and in the same year certain of the Cardinals, claiming that the menaces of the Roman populace had hindered their freedom of choice, elected Robert of Geneva, who took the title of Clement VII. Urban refused to recognize his deposition and took up his residence at Rome, while Clement went to Avignon. Thus there were

two claimants to the Papacy, a condition of things which not only weakened the Church by dividing Catholic Christendom into two parties, but also embittered the already existing civil and political strife. On the death of Urban VI the Italian party elected Boniface IX as his successor, and five years later Benedict XIII was chosen to succeed Clement at Avignon. Boniface was followed by Innocent VII, who, however, survived his election by two years only, and on his death the Italian Cardinals chose Angelo Corrario, who is known to History as Gregory XII. This pontiff and Benedict undertook to resign their claims if such resignation should seem likely to promote the peace of the church, but as events proved neither was willing to carry out his promise, and in 1409 nine of the Cardinals who had supported Benedict made common cause with the Italian party, and the latter being thus strengthened, convoked the Council of Pisa which condemned and deposed both Popes, and chose John of Candia, who took the name of Alexander V.

The deposed Pontiffs, however, refused to recognize the validity of this sentence, so that there were now three claimants to St. Peter's Throne, and although Alexander died in 1410, the strife of parties was not thereby lessened, since the sixteen Cardinals who had elected him now chose in his place another Italian who is known as John XXIII. He it was who in 1414 convoked the council of Constance, perhaps expecting that Council to support his pretensions and depose his rivals, but if this was his expectation it was disappointed, for by the unanimous vote of the Council John was himself deposed, and shortly afterwards Gregory expressed his willingness to resign. Sentence of deposition was subsequently passed upon Benedict, who, however, continued to claim, and so far as he could to exercise, the Papal authority until his death in 1423, when the two Cardinals who had continued to support him chose Clement VIII in his place. Meanwhile the Council of Constance had chosen Otto de Colonna, who as Martin V succeeded in healing the Schism, for in 1429 Clement, the last of the Anti-Popes, was persuaded to resign.

In view of the complexity of these proceedings it may be convenient to append a table of the Popes who reigned during the period under discussion, the names of Anti-Popes being in italics:

Benedict XII

Clement VI
Innocent VII
Benedict XIII
Innocent VI
Urban V
Gregory XI
Gregory XII
Benedict XIII
Urban VI
Clement VII
Alexander V
Gregory XII
Benedict XIII
Boniface IX
Clement VII
Benedict XIII
John XXIII
Gregory XII
Benedict XIII
Martin V

Besides the Schism other causes tended to weaken the Papal authority in the country with which we have to deal. The Bishops of Utrecht were dependent rather upon the favour of the Emperor than upon that of the Pope, and even during the years which marked the increase of the Papal authority throughout Europe, there are many instances of strong resistance being offered to it both in the Low Countries and elsewhere in Northern Europe. Heresy, as Motley has pointed out, was a plant of early growth in the Netherlands, and “from the earliest times neither Prince People nor even Prelates had been very dutiful to the Pope.” Students of history will

remember many instances of resistance to the Papal claims in England, especially during the reigns of Edward III. and his immediate successors, and as early as 1413 the feeling of the people against the clergy led the commons to petition Henry V. to seize certain revenues of the Church, and apply them to the service of the State.

It is necessary, however, to go back to an earlier period than this in order to trace the development of the feeling of which such acts were the outcome, and it is impossible to deny that ecclesiastical dignitaries and the subordinate clergy gave many provocations to the civil power and to the people at large in the years which preceded the time of which we speak.

As early as the beginning of the twelfth century the notorious Tanchelyn, an illiterate impostor, caused great commotion in Brabant by his denunciations of the clergy, and although his utterances were blasphemous and his conduct was grotesquely indecent, he gained for a time a considerable following, a result which could hardly have occurred had there been no substratum of truth in the protest which he made against clerical domination. During the progress of the same century other teachers arose to cause divisions and strife in the Church to which they professed allegiance, and, naturally enough, persecution followed, to be attended as usual by a yet more luxuriant growth in that which it strove to eradicate. By the end of the thirteenth century the clerical power had begun to decline. The enormous wealth of the Church aroused the cupidity of the civil power, and the depravity of many clerks excited the indignation of thoughtful men. Even those who would not consent to rob the Church of her possessions, were forced to admit that the influence of great wealth was not wholly for good: that luxurious indolence was too often the effect of it: and that the austerity of life and sobriety of conduct which marked certain sects which were regarded as heretical, could not but give those sects a firm hold upon the minds of the people. It was perhaps to this feeling that the great popularity of the mendicant orders was due, but in any case that popularity grew continuously throughout the thirteenth century, and the orders themselves multiplied to an extent so inconvenient that the council of Lyons in 1274 had decreed the suppression of all such orders as had sprung up since the Pontificate of Innocent III. Thus four mendicant orders only were left, namely, the Dominicans, the Franciscans, the Carmelites and the Hermits of St. Augustine, and the reputation for sanctity enjoyed by these

orders was such that it became a common practice for testators to provide in their wills that their bodies should be wrapped in a Dominican or Franciscan habit, in the hope of thereby obtaining mercy in the Day of Judgement. This popularity, however, was followed by a reaction; thus in our own country Richard of Armagh and others attacked the authority of the mendicants, and it was to his opposition to them that Wyclif owed the sentence of deprivation that was passed on him. In addition to the effect of such attacks from without, the societies were also weakened by internal dissensions, many of which appear to the modern reader as frivolous and puerile, being based upon philosophical rather than upon religious differences, though others had their origin in more serious matters. It is, however, only necessary for our purpose to remind the reader of the bitter quarrels between the different sections of Franciscans and of the long feud between the latter and the Dominicans.

Amongst other religious bodies which flourished during this period are the Lollards and Béguines, of whom it is necessary to make special mention, as they are referred to in the Lives. The former name is constantly used by English writers as if it were descriptive of the followers of Wyclif only, whereas the term is applied by other authors to the Franciscan Tertiaries, the Cellites, the Brothers of the Common Life, and many others. According to Dr. Mosheim ("Eccl. Hist." Cent. XIV, § 36, note) the word means primarily "a singer," and denotes one who is constantly singing hymns to God; "among those Lollards who made extraordinary pretences to piety ... there were many hypocrites who entertained the most ridiculous opinions and concealed the most enormous vices under the specious mask of this extraordinary profession. It was chiefly after the rise of the Alexians that the name Lollard became infamous." All sorts of wickedness and many pernicious sentiments were, according to the authority cited, attributed to these Alexians, and as they were often referred to as Lollards, the name gradually came to be applied to any one who covered heresies or crimes under the appearance of piety.

The name "Béguine" is also of somewhat uncertain signification, being applied both to that body which owed its origin to an austere branch of the Franciscan order, and also to certain German and Belgic societies which flourished during the thirteenth and following centuries. It is with the latter only that we have to do, and it is sufficient for our purpose to say that

though it has been shown that certain societies called by this name were established in Holland and Flanders as early as the eleventh century, it was not until the thirteenth that they gained any great celebrity. It appears that a number of pious women associated themselves together and lived under the rule of a superior of their own sex, dividing their time between devotional exercises and honest labour. They did not, however, bind themselves by vows, but were at liberty to quit the society or to marry if so disposed. The name Béguine means—like Beghard—“one who is assiduous in prayer,” and having been used at first of pious persons generally, became afterwards applied to the societies above mentioned. After a period of prosperity which lasted until the early part of the fourteenth century the Béguines fell into disrepute, and although John XXII and his successors afforded them some protection they continued to fall both in wealth and prosperity, because as it would seem they were supposed to have been corrupted by the infamous opinions of the Brethren of the Free Spirit. Hence it is that we find the name used in the Life of Florentius as a term of reproach. This period, marked as it was by civil and religious discord, was of course favourable to the production of fanatic enthusiasts and visionaries, such as the Flagellants who caused some commotion in 1340, and the Dancers who disturbed the Netherlands in 1373. Somewhat later, but still during our period, arose the Brothers and Sisters of the Free Spirit, the Men of Understanding, and other sects, all of which added to the disorder of this unhappy time, and disturbed in a special degree the country in which Groote and his followers lived.

Although the explosion caused by the condemnation of Huss took place in another land, its echoes were heard and some of its effects felt in Holland and the surrounding districts. Huss was condemned and suffered in 1415, and his friend Jerome of Prague in the following year; but the religious dissensions and the barbarous war which they caused continued to disturb further an already distracted world, until Æneas Sylvius, the emissary of the Council of Basel, succeeded in reconciling the more reasonable section of the Hussites to the Church, in 1433. Whatever view may be taken as to the justice or otherwise of the condemnation of the views of Huss, there can be no doubt that the demands of those of his followers who are known as Taborites were grossly extravagant, that their doctrines were grotesque and heretical, and that their conduct was at least as barbarous and cruel as that of their most fanatical opponents.

It was not by actual heretics only that the peace of the Church was disturbed; various abuses had slowly developed, and were tolerated by many persons whose orthodoxy was never questioned. We need, however, deal only with those to which reference is made in the text.

It will be observed that Groote lays great stress upon the evils of pluralism, and indeed the disastrous consequences of the non-enforcement of the Canons against this abuse must have been evident to all. According to Hallam ("Mid. Ages," c. 7, p. 2) there were cases of fifty, or even sixty benefices being held by a single incumbent, and in our own country it was found that in 1367 some clerks enjoyed more than twenty benefices. An abuse of a like nature was the holding by persons other than priests of ecclesiastical preferments. Thus Petrarch was enabled to enjoy the revenues of two benefices although he never took full orders. Closely connected with these abuses we find the crime of Simony, a term that, in the wider sense in which Groote uses it, must be taken to include many things besides the actual sale and purchase of benefices, such as the traffic in Indulgences which, as all who are conversant with the history of this period are aware, was lamentably common. Odious as is any traffic in the temporalities attached to spiritual cures, the Church has found great difficulty in suppressing it: as early as the eleventh century such simony was a reproach to the clergy in Holland and to the patrons "who made their powers of nomination and investiture subservient to their rapacity." By the ancient canons, indeed, a benefice was avoided by any simoniacal payment or stipulation, but for obvious reasons this law was seldom enforced; as time went on the practice became more and more common in spite of the protests of upright churchmen. In 1377 the English Parliament presented a petition to Edward III complaining of the greed of patrons, and in Germany, according to Sismondi, things were even worse than in England. Pope Urban VI owed no small part of his unpopularity with a section of churchmen to their fear that he would interfere with their illegitimate profits, and the council of Constance proposed to deal with this growing evil.

A modern reader might perhaps feel some surprise at the severity with which Groote speaks of usurers, but it is well known that from very early times the practice of usury was regarded as criminal. In the year 1179 Alexander III decreed that usurers "*nec ad communionem recipiantur*

altaris, nec Christianam si in hoc peccato decesserint, accipiant sepulturam, sed nec oblationem eorum quisquam accipiat.” So, too, in Spain the Inquisition took cognisance of usury, and long after the Reformation Anglican Divines continued to speak with horror of the practice—indeed, it may be doubted whether the prejudice against what is essentially a legitimate commercial transaction is even now dead, although the unanimous verdict of economists ought to have settled the question.

It is unnecessary to comment upon the protest made by Groote against the grosser sins of his contemporaries, but no one who takes the trouble to examine the evidence can doubt that his protests were fully justified.

Since many references are made in the *Lives to Schools and Universities*, it may be well to review briefly the state of learning during this period. The interest in classical studies, which had declined during the latter half of the thirteenth century, was revived to a great extent in the fourteenth, and during the lifetime of Groote and his followers many schools and universities were founded and became flourishing institutions, as, for example, at Cologne, Florence, Pisa, and Prague. The study of Greek, which had been neglected, was revived, owing to the influence of such scholars as Boccaccio, Petrarch, and Manuel Chrysolaras, and although the enthusiasm for classical learning was more marked in Italy than elsewhere, these great scholars had followers in Northern Europe as well as in their own land.

Somewhat earlier than the period with which we deal, Clement V had given encouragement to the study of Hebrew and other Oriental languages, which he directed “should be taught in public schools that the Church might never lack a sufficient number of missionaries properly qualified to dispute with Jews and Mohammedans, and to diffuse the light of the gospel throughout the East.” Mathematical study, which was regarded with some suspicion, owing to its supposed connection with astrology and magic, had been pursued with success by Thomas Bradwardine, Archbishop of Canterbury (d. 1349), although the history of such enquirers as Cecco d’Ascoli hardly encouraged others to pursue that branch of knowledge. The University of Paris at which Groote studied was specially famous for Scholastic Theology, and it is interesting to note that Groote is said to have acquired great learning in Civil as well as Common law, although the study of the former was prohibited in that university: we know, however, from

other sources that the prohibition was disregarded. The University of Prague, of which Florentius was a member, was not founded until 1350, but its repute grew rapidly and attracted many students, until, as Badius says ("Vita Thomae à Kempis," viii, § 7), "it became infected by heresy," when it fell into disrepute with orthodox Catholics. The reference is, of course, to the Hussite troubles which had their origin here, Huss having persuaded the authorities to take away three votes from the German party in University elections. This produced a secession, to which the University of Leipsic owes its origin, and the ill feeling which the action of Huss aroused was no doubt one of the causes which led to his condemnation.

Another great centre of learning was the school of Cologne, which is called by Angelius "the child of the University of Paris and the mother of that at Louvain." This institution was founded by Urban VI in 1388, while the academy at Louvain was raised to the dignity of an university by John IV of Brabant in 1423.

Though we have some considerable knowledge as to the subjects taught and the methods pursued in the Universities during this period, very few records remain of school life. A Kempis himself, as he tells us in "The Life of Florentius," was a pupil in the school of Deventer, of which institution John Boheme was master; a notice of this school may be found in "De Laet. Belg. Descript.," ed. 1630, p. 239, where we learn that the subjects taught were Philosophy, Theology, Hebrew, and Civil law. As to the methods adopted we may gather some information from the chronicles of Windesheim by Buschius, a contemporary of à Kempis. In this work there is an account of John Cele, who is mentioned in the life of Groote, and his biographer gives some account of the school of Zwolle of which Cele was master from 1376 to 1417. In all probability the schools at Zwolle and Deventer were managed on similar lines, so that Buschius' account of the former has some interest for us. Strict discipline seems to have been maintained among the eight hundred scholars, details of which may be found in the chronicle above-named, and in Kettlewell's work, entitled, "Thomas à Kempis and the Brothers of the Common Life." Further information about Cele himself may be derived from the chronicle of Mt. St. Agnes.

The principle of Association which led to the formation of Trade Guilds in this part of the world was extended so as to include other interests, and to

this principle was due the formation of the Guilds of Rhetoric which flourished in most of the principal towns. The importance for our purpose of such association is the influence they exercised over the people, for it is a remarkable fact that the cultivation of the arts and the pursuit of knowledge were during the fourteenth century by no means confined to the upper classes. During the time of which we speak the influence of these Guilds in the Low Countries was not so great as it afterwards became, but in France and Germany such associations had already considerable importance. Amongst other things the guilds encouraged theatrical performances, some of which were conducted in the churches, as, for instance, “King Herod and his Deeds,” which was enacted in Utrecht Cathedral in 1418 (Motley, loc. cit.). Their efforts, however, were not confined to the exhibition of religious dramas, and it is not unlikely that the “idle amusements and spectacles” mentioned in the text were entertainments organized by these societies.

Some reference must be made to the social condition of the people in the days of Groote and his followers. In spite of the disturbances which perpetually recurred, this was a period during which wealth accumulated with astonishing rapidity. The flourishing condition of the wool trade in Flanders, Brabant and Hainault was the chief cause of this prosperity, but the fisheries of Zeland and Holland also contributed to it. Cologne had long been a great trading centre, and as early as 1220 the merchants of that city set up a factory in London. The opening of trade in the Baltic through the enterprise of the Hanseatic confederacy and the development of commercial intercourse with southern Europe during the fourteenth century also contributed to make this accumulation of wealth possible, and there can be no doubt that the Trade Guilds, to which reference has been made, assisted the merchants to resist the arbitrary measures of their nominal rulers and to amass riches which rivalled or surpassed those of the ancient nobility. Agriculture, too, had made considerable progress, largely owing to the efforts of the Religious Houses to which grants of waste land were made, and these being cleared and put under cultivation added largely to the wealth of the countries in which they were situated.

The continuance of this prosperity appears the more remarkable when we consider the fact that throughout this period the countries of which we speak were devastated from time to time by visitations of the Plague and the Black Death; no less than six of the Brothers whose lives are here written

died of these diseases, and à Kempis notes that many others of the community met with a like fate. The horrible pestilence called the Plague seems to have reached Europe from the Levant in 1346. A year or two later it ravaged France and England, and in 1350 appeared in an aggravated form in Germany and the Low Countries. Other severe visitations occurred in 1361, 1366, 1398, 1404 and 1439, and although we must receive with reserve the statements of contemporary chronicles as to the mortality caused by these pestilences, there can be no doubt that a considerable proportion of the population was swept off by them. According to Sismondi between four and five millions died in France alone during the first plague, and although some of the later epidemics appear to have been less deadly, the devastation caused by them cannot but have affected detrimentally the material progress of the country, and great misery must have resulted, especially amongst the poor, to whose service the Brothers of the Common Life specially devoted themselves.

Another disease which scourged the country was leprosy, and this complaint is mentioned several times in the text. According to the greatest living authority leprosy is caused by a diet of more or less putrid fish. If this theory is correct, a country like that of which we speak would be likely to suffer, since in it fish formed the staple diet of many of the people, and in the inland parts especially salted fish was largely eaten, even on occasions when abstinence from flesh was not ordained.

The existence in France of two thousand leper houses, and in Europe as a whole of nineteen thousand such establishments, shows how severe a scourge this complaint must have been (Sprengel, "*Hist. de la Médecine*," ii. 374, quoted by Buckle). The treatment to which the unfortunate victims of the disease were subjected added to the horror of their lot, and the action of the Brothers in ministering to them is the more laudable inasmuch as by so doing they ran counter to the prevailing prejudices and superstitions; for at this time—and indeed long afterwards—diseases in general and leprosy in particular were looked upon as indications of Divine wrath rather than as being due to natural causes. It appears that some of the Brothers had a knowledge of medicine, and though Groote deprecates the practice of this art it is probable that he was not altogether unacquainted with it; in any case he must have had the famous saying of Hippocrates in his mind when he laid down the rule "not to give remedies of doubtful virtue."

It seems that the first suggestion for the formation of a Brotherhood came from Florentius (see Buschius Chr. of Windesheim), who with the assent of Groote gathered together a number of young clerks and copyists who were willing to live a Common Life. These persons took no formal vows, but undertook to obey such rules as might be drawn up from time to time for the government of the Community, and from this small beginning grew the Brotherhood of the Common Life. Although the credit for this suggestion is due in part to Florentius, yet Groote himself had formerly desired to found a religious community. Lack of means, however, and the opposition of the existing Orders, which he foresaw, had hindered the execution of this design: the former difficulty was overcome by the generosity of one Lambert Stuerman, who by his will left a large sum of money at Groote's disposal; but Groote himself did not live long enough to carry out his desires. On his death-bed, however, he gave instructions to his followers to build and establish a House, and transfer to it such members of the original society as might desire to join. He particularly directed that this House should adopt the Rule of the Canons Regular of St. Augustine, assigning the following reasons for his decision. He did not desire, he said, that the members of the Order should be wholly separated from the world like the Carthusians, nor that the Rule under which they lived should be as severe as that of the Cistercians. On the other hand, he was aware of the advantage to be derived by adhering to the rule of an established order, for by this means he hoped to overcome or avoid the opposition of the Mendicants, who would certainly do their utmost to crush an entirely new society.

Obedient to the directions given by their leader, Florentius, whom Groote had named as his successor, proceeded at once to build the House at Windesheim, a desolate place between Zwolle and Deventer. Afterwards, as the movement gained fresh adherents other houses were built, such as that near Arnheim, called "The Fount of the Blessed Mary," that near Hoern, named "The House of the New Light," and a third, called "The House of Mount St. Agnes," at Nemel.

The Rule which was thus adopted had been summarized by Kettlewell (p. 173), and contains the following headings:

I. To observe the fundamental law of Love, and to imitate the example of the Mother Church of Jerusalem in union of heart and in having all things in common.

II. To learn the lesson of Humility, according to the pattern of the Life of Christ and that of His nearest and most faithful followers.

III. To observe the Canonical Hours and times of prayer.

IV. To take charge of the sick and infirm wherever they be found, and to minister to their bodily and spiritual needs.

V. To avoid all affectation and singularity in dress.

VI. To give and receive fraternal correction and admonition from one another, to confess our faults and to submit ourselves wholly to our Superior.

VII. To promote in all things the interest of the Community; to be diligent in all duties and never to be idle.

VIII. To observe outward cleanliness and decency, and to take proper care of the body for the sake of the soul, both in health and sickness.

In connection with this last provision it is interesting to find that in consequence of the austerities practised by certain of the Brothers in the earlier days of the Community at Deventer their health failed, and therefore the custom was established at Windesheim of exacting from every member a promise “to endeavour to eat well, and sleep well.”

The habit adopted by the Brothers was of dark grey cloth, and when they became Canons Regular they wore a white rochet with a black hood.

It will be noticed that the only title given to the head of the community in the following lives is that of Rector. The first “Prior” of the Order appears to have been John à Kempis (elected in 1398), the elder brother of Thomas, to whom reference is made in the life of Gronde.

The members of the Brotherhood were divided into two classes, the Clerks and the Unlettered Brethren; and of these the former devoted themselves to the cause of education, and to copying books in addition to the duties above indicated, while the latter occupied themselves in manual labour.

It is beside our purpose to trace in detail the growth and decline of this society, but it may not be out of place to indicate some of the causes of that decline.

Some writers of repute have referred to à Kempis, Gerard Groote and others who belonged to this society as forerunners of the Reformation, and

it is true enough to say that their teaching and that of certain leaders of the Protestant movement had points of contact. To say this, however, is to say very little, for the same statement might be made equally truly of the teaching of Luther and that of Bellarmine, whilst a very moderate degree of ingenuity would suffice to show that on many points Calvin was at one with St. Francis Xavier. Groote indeed protests against various abuses, but so also does Urban VI; and if Gerard of Zutphen advocates the dissemination of portions of the Scripture in the vulgar tongue, it was a Pope who praised the Archbishop of Florence for publishing the sacred writings in the language of his own country. It is hardly possible to read the lives which follow without admitting that both their subjects and their author were loyal to their Church and to its head: on this point the appendix to the life of Lubert Berner would appear to be conclusive, for the temptations there described would probably be regarded in a very different light by one whose leanings were toward Protestantism.

It is perhaps more true to say that the movement called the New Devotion is one manifestation of a tendency which, according to the direction given to it, may become either a source of additional power, or a cause of disruption. This is not in any sense a controversial work, for which, indeed, the writer has no qualifications, and these lives, with the other writings of à Kempis, may be left to tell their own story; but since a late writer seems to represent the Reformation as the “fruit” of the labour of the Brothers of the Common Life (Kettlewell, p. 379), it is necessary to remark that the Founder of the Brotherhood uses the words, “Salvo Semper iudicio Sacrosanctae Romanae ecclesiae cui humillime undique et ubique me submitto,” and his followers never departed from the principle here laid down. Had that principle been adopted universally, the Reformation could never have taken the course it did take. There is a wide difference between protests that are directed against breaches of recognized law, and objections made to the system of which those laws are the Code. The former was the course taken by Groote and his followers, while Luther for good or evil chose the latter. Moreover, neither Gerard Groote nor any of his followers whose lives are written here, attacked any doctrine of the Catholic creed, nor did they claim that liberty of interpretation which many Reformers allowed. The decline of the Community coincided with the rise of Protestantism, but the causes of that decline are not far to seek. In the first

place the Brothers had supported themselves to a great extent by copying books, a source of revenue which came to an end with the introduction of the printing press. Secondly, their schools had to face the competition of similar institutions which sprang up during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In some cases their own pupils successfully competed with them, in others the Institutions founded by the Society of Jesus became popular at the expense of the schools maintained by the Brothers of the Common Life. Thirdly, “when the struggle about the Reformation became acute, the Papal Party insisted that those who clave to the Church as a divine institution, must either withdraw from their monasteries or give in their adherence to them,” and “This led to a great disbandment of the Brotherhood” (Kettlewell, p. 379). From this it appears that even in the later days to which the passage quoted refers, the Brotherhood as a whole had not adopted the tenets of the reforming party, while in earlier times, as we have already seen, the members were thoroughly loyal to Rome; indeed, the association received the approbation of the Council of Constance, which would not have been given had their fidelity been suspected.

The text which had been adopted for this translation is that of Somalius, which was published in 1600. The Editor tells us in his preface that he collated all the known manuscripts, and paid special attention to those which he found written in à Kempis’s own hand, in the monastery of St. Martin at Louvain; he, however, omits, as he says, certain lives, because the manuscripts were in so bad a condition that he could make nothing of them. It appears uncertain whether these omitted lives were really by Thomas à Kempis. The earliest printed edition is that published at Nuremberg in 1492–1494, of which copies are to be found in the Bodleian Library at Oxford and in the British Museum, and this edition contains no lives other than those given by Somalius. The book begins with the “Imitation,” which occupies twenty-six leaves, and goes on with “Tractatus de meditatione Cordis Johannis Gerson,” the inclusion of which work in a volume devoted to Thomas à Kempis, is remarkable in view of the controversy which has arisen with regard to the authorship of the “Imitation.” It is beside our purpose to discuss this vexed question, as there is no doubt as to the authenticity of the “Lives” or of the propriety of their attribution to à Kempis, but it may be worth while to mention the fact that the present writer has seen a MS. of the first book of the “Imitatio,” whose date would

seem to be about 1423, in which that work is assigned to a Carthusian Monk.

Besides the Nuremberg Folio there are other printed editions earlier than that of Somalius, which the latter seems to have consulted, namely, the works of à Kempis published in Paris by Jodocus Badius Ascensius in 1500, and re-issued in 1549. For purposes of correction this edition is of little value, since the same blunders and misprints occur frequently both in this and in Somalius' edition; but it is interesting as containing a Life of à Kempis in twelve chapters written by the Editor, of which the eighth gives some further particulars as to Gerard Groote, while the eleventh contains a long exhortation addressed to à Kempis by Florentius Radewin.

"The Lives" are written in the form of a dialogue between an elder Brother of the house and a Novice, and were no doubt intended for the instruction of those who should join the Brotherhood. In the Nuremberg Folio the whole of Book II (the Life of Florentius) is entitled "de humilitate Christi," a title which is confined in Somalius's edition to the first chapter of this biography; this heading gives the key-note to the whole composition, for throughout the Lives the virtues upon which the author insists most strongly are those of humility and obedience. There are several points to be noted with reference to the matter contained in these biographies. (1) The use of quotations from the Bible is somewhat peculiar, or at least may strike the modern reader as being so; e.g., passages are taken away from their context and made to bear a meaning other than that which they were intended primarily to convey. This "mystical interpretation" was then regarded as legitimate, and, indeed, is still so regarded by many persons. The quotations are of course from the Vulgate, and the translations are taken usually from the Douay version.

(2) With regard to the last chapter of Groote's Life, it is obvious from a perusal of the original that the whole is taken from notes made by Gerard himself, which notes were left in a fragmentary condition, and were not thrown into regular literary form, probably because they were intended for the writer's own guidance and not for publication. Thus we find constant changes from the first to the second person, and it is often doubtful where the consideration of one subject ends and that of another begins; this is particularly noticeable in § 16.

(3) Hirsche has remarked that “the details given in these eleven biographies are either derived from the personal experiences of à Kempis himself or are drawn from the testimony of reliable witnesses,” and the manner in which some of the incidents are related suggests that even when the author does not expressly mention his own name he was personally concerned in the events which he describes. Thus we gather a certain amount of information as to à Kempis himself, which is the more interesting in view of the scanty knowledge which has come down to us directly of the life of one whose name has become a household word.

(4) Appended to these biographies is a life of the Virgin Lydewig, to whom reference is made in the notice of Arnold of Schoonhoven. This life is not included in the present translation, which is devoted to the Lives of Groote and his followers only. There is little doubt, however, that it is an authentic work of à Kempis, as a copy of it exists in his own handwriting, though the original MSS., containing the Lives of the eleven Brethren and the chronicles of Mount St. Agnes have disappeared. On the other hand, the life is prefaced by a dedication ascribing it to “Frater N pauper peregrinus,” but this may easily refer to Thomas himself.

I have already disclaimed any intention of entering into the controversy regarding the authorship of the “Imitatio,” but as several passages in the latter work are closely parallel to sentences in the Lives it seems advisable to call attention to the fact. The reader will find particulars in “Hirsche,” v. 2. p. 523.

(6) The date of the composition of these lives cannot be determined with certainty. Hirsche states that 1430 is the last date that occurs, being the year of Arnold’s death, but as I have already pointed out, the text which has been adopted gives 1439 as the last year of Henry Brune, and there is reason to think that this date is correct since Brune is said to have lived “long after those who had known their first fervour in the Devout Life with him.” All we can say on the question of the date is that the Lives were written later than 1440 and that the author was upwards of sixty years of age when he wrote them.

Hitherto no complete translation of the Lives into English has been published, although several writers have made extracts from them. The Rev. S. Kettlewell in his “Thomas a Kempis and the Brothers of the Common Life” has given us versions of selected passages, and as the present

translation differs widely in many places from the versions given in the work named it may be desirable in the interests of accuracy to refer to some of the more prominent of those differences. In Groote, chap. viii, § 2, we have a passage which runs thus: “Cum tuba salutari intonaret ... commota sunt corda plurimorum a facie formidinis Domini, et a ventura ira iudicii extremi, et ignis extremi”: according to Kettlewell this means that Groote “entirely abandoned the vulgar arguments drawn from the fears of Hell,” an interpretation which is both impossible in view of the original text, and is a complete misrepresentation of Groote’s teaching (Kettlewell, op. cit., 2nd ed., p. 70). Again in chap. ix, § 2, we have “Tanto libentius doctrinam audiebant quanto maiora pietatis beneficia in eo redundare videbant.” Kettlewell takes this to mean that the more the scribes listened to Gerard’s teaching “the more did they seem to abound in beneficent acts of piety,” (Kettlewell, p. 72.) So, too, in Florentius, chap. xiv, § 3, “Incontinenti expedit” is rendered by “he extricated the incontinent man” (Kettlewell, p. 106), whereas the passage means, as I think, “he settled the matter out of hand”: and in chap. xix, § 3, “quod cuidam revelatum esset quod adhuc supervicturus esset” is translated “it was revealed respecting him to some one who is still living,” a rendering which is grammatically impossible.

Such slips as “a quarter of an hour” for “quartâ horâ,” “liquor” for “cibus,” “soul” for “mensa,” and the like, are of small moment, but they show at least that to differ from a translator who committed such blunders does not argue a great amount of audacity. More serious, however, are such mistakes as that made in the “Life of John Ketel,” when Kettlewell makes à Kempis say that John was “so lately well known to me” instead of “in old days well known,” etc. In regard to this it is only necessary to observe that Ketel had been dead for more than forty years when à Kempis wrote these words, and to use the phrase “so lately” is to confuse dates. It is not necessary to multiply instances of the mistakes, more or less important, made by this translator, but the reliability of his work may be judged by “quid praetendit ille bonus homo”—what a good man he has shown himself to be; “integros panes”—“the whole of the bread” though the context requires “whole loaves.” “ferens patienter verba increpantis”—“hearing the words with incredible patience.” All these blunders occur in the translation of a single page of the Latin.

Kettlewell's work, however, is not without its value, as apart from his extracts from the Lives, it contains much information that is of interest to students of à Kempis, and the present writer would not have singled out the above passages for adverse comment but for his desire to justify himself in differing from one who is regarded as a leading authority.

THE LIFE OF THE REVEREND MASTER
GERARD THE GREAT COMMONLY
CALLED GROOTE

THE LIFE OF GERARD THE GREAT

PREFACE

The Preface to the life of the venerable Master Gerard the Great, commonly called “Groote”

(1) WITH the help of God, and daring much for the sake of Charity, I will try, my most beloved brother, to set forth the acts of the Fathers, though I recount but few out of many: and this I do by reason of thy frequent importunities, and for the common good.

Now since many Fathers and devout brethren, who were of old well known to me, are fallen asleep, I fear not to speak of their virtues, that by so doing I may leave a good memorial of them to those that come after, when I speak of the excellent example which they set, to enhance yet more the honour of the name of God. I will begin therefore from that notable and devout preacher the venerable Master Gerard who is surnamed “Groote.”

(2) After this if the Lord will, I will add further certain examples of holy conversation, drawn from the lives of those devout brethren who were his disciples, hoping thereby to stir up thy devotion, and that of other single-minded brethren.

Though I did not see Gerard in the flesh, yet have I known in the body divers men who owned discipleship to him, and from these I have often heard of his good deeds; so that thou must not think that I have devised these things of mine own imagination, but rather that I have received a faithful relation thereof from trusty persons, both men and women.

CHAPTER I

Of the origin and interpretation of Gerard's name

(1) THE venerable Master Gerard, called the “Great,” was a citizen of the city of Deventer, born of honourable parents of that same place, and tenderly nurtured by the loving care of his family; the name which he inherited from his earthly parents was apt enough, but by Divine providence it was afterwards changed for a better; for he who had exchanged his former manner of life for a new mode of living, justly deserved that his name too should have a godly signification by reason of his signal virtues, as the following narrative will show.

(2) His name Gerard may be interpreted as meaning one “gerens artes,” that is, “cultivating the arts,” because being given up to literary studies he was deeply learned in the liberal arts and in many sciences: or again the interpretation may be “gerens ardorem”—one who cultivates a burning zeal—because, being mercifully prevented by the grace of God, his inner man was inflamed by the love of Christ, and moved by an irresistible impulse to enhance the Glory of God: or thirdly one may say that he was rightly named Gerard as being one “gerens ardua”—cultivating that which is on high—because being wholly turned to God, he during his life did mighty and lofty deeds, lifting his mind earnestly to the contemplation of heavenly things, and by his preaching converted many peoples to the amending of their lives. His life, his words, his character, and his teaching were a light and a flame to all this land of ours: so in fact, as in name, he was “great” in the world—endowed with wealth, honour, learning, and high place: yet his greatness stood out more conspicuously from his contempt of worldliness, and his imitation of the lowly life of Jesus Christ, and also from the abundant

harvest of followers whom he brought to Him, as the traces left behind him do clearly show.

(3) This man therefore shall be held in perpetual memory, a man who in our own day was a teacher, following the regulations of the orthodox faith; and one who by his pious example restored the position of our Holy Religion. Although for a long time he mixed carelessly and thoughtlessly in the concerns of this world, yet, after his conversion, his life was truly exemplary, being spent in the deepest humility and devotion, in holy poverty and frequent fasting, a life too which he ended well and with a happy issue of his strife.

CHAPTER II

Of his rapid progress at the University of Paris

(1) WHEN he was growing toward manhood, Gerard was sent by his parents to the University of Paris, and being furnished with abundant means, beyond those of many of his companions, he busied himself with those pursuits for the sake of which he had come. At that time he was not seeking the glory of Christ as the end of his studies, but pursuing the shadow of a great reputation he was chiefly anxious for the praise of men.

(2) In a short time, however, having passed through the usual course for students, he eagerly sought for higher place; and in virtue of his good understanding, a Master of Arts degree was conferred upon him in the eighteenth year of his age. Having gained this degree, and being fired by a natural genius and puffed up with worldly knowledge, he was rewarded with preferment in the Church, and received amongst other benefices a Canonry in the Church of Aix. But hitherto he walked in the broad ways of the world, not being yet inspired, until by the mercy of God he was changed into another man.

CHAPTER III

How his conversion was revealed to a hermit in Cologne

(1) BUT inasmuch as the Almighty and merciful God, who alone worketh great marvels, had decreed to loose this learned and most famous Master from the bonds of this present world, He brought the process of that conversion to full effect; and this conversion, unexpected and unknown to the generality of men, was beforehand revealed and foretold to a certain hermit in Cologne.

(2) For when on a time Gerard was in that city and wandering idly was watching some worldly games, the aforesaid hermit, expressly mentioning the name and describing the dress of Gerard, foretold that his conversion should shortly be brought to pass, and should be of profit to many.

Wherefore a certain man, who knew of this prophecy, came to Gerard where he was standing, and said, “Why standest thou thus intent upon empty things? Thou oughtest to become another man.”

This saying about himself Gerard thought but childishness, nor did he at the time dwell much upon it; but God who hath foreknowledge of the future and doth not deceive, after a short time brought the word to pass as He had fore-ordained, and re-called to Himself Gerard whom He loved, from the paths of iniquity to the state of godly living, working by means of a Religious of the Carthusian order.

CHAPTER IV

How he was drawn to God by the Carthusian

(1) THERE was in the district of Gelders, near the city of Arnheim, a certain Religious that was Prior of the Carthusian Monastery in Monichuysen, a man of learning and piety who had formerly, when in the world, been intimate with Gerard. This man being full of compassion and drawn towards his neighbour by his zeal for souls, began to consider in what way he could have speech with Gerard and treat in private with him for his salvation, so that a man so great, and a master so learned might not perish in the world, but might be snatched from out the snares of the Devil by the aid of God and be joined to the number of the elect.

Now at that time particularly the disposition of the world seemed to be on all sides turned to evil, so that there were few who preached the Word of Life both by example and precept, and fewer still who followed the rule of continency; and this was above all things lamentable, that those who professed the name of Holy Religion and the state of the Devout Life through lack of inspiration followed but lamely in the footprints of the Fathers who had gone before. Amongst the Carthusians indeed the light of the Heavenly Life remained, though hidden; to carnal men their rule seemed to be austere enough, but yet it was most acceptable to God, and to men of fervent spirit a thing pleasant and worthy to be chosen.

(2) Meantime it happened that for some reason which arose, the aforesaid Prior went to Utrecht, and when he knew that his beloved Gerard was there he hastened lovingly to hold converse with him; and soon, on a good opportunity, let down the net of holy exhortation to draw this great fish from the waves of worldliness.

He approached Gerard as his familiar friend, greeted him as his old comrade and exhorted him with words of wisdom as his kindly host: he

spoke to him as to a man of learning of “The Sovereign Good”; he laid before him the rewards of Eternity and the terrors of the judgement to come, with mingled kindness and severity: he praised the Religious Life, and denounced the ways of the world, showing that everything beneath the sun shall perish. “Death,” he said, “doth hang over every man, but the day and hour of death are unknown. But oh! how great are the gifts promised to those that follow Christ.” The grace of God was present with them during this holy converse, which was oftentimes repeated; the heart of the hearer was softened, and the reverend Master believed the words spoken to him; he assented to the Prior’s words as true, and was led by his reasoning; he was attracted by the promises, and confirmed by the examples of the Saints. At length he resolved to change his mode of life for a better, and by the favour of God to renounce the pomps of the world.

(3) The Prior, perceiving this, was greatly delighted in that the seed from God had fallen upon good ground: and he rejoiced with exceeding joy over this great fish which was caught by the hook of Christ to be drawn thereby the sooner from the whirlpools of the Sea. He returned joyfully to his community and rendered thanks to God from Whom is every good thing, and confessed that he himself had not framed his discourse in vain. “For,” quoth he, “I have hopes that I have captured Gerard, and in regard to his conversion I have faith that he will be ready to hold to his good resolution and to prove it by his deeds.” Oh! overpowering and glorious mercy of our Saviour! Oh! unspeakable virtue and grace of the Holy Ghost, which with ease can change the heart of man when He taketh up His abode therein, and doth enlighten it. This is the transforming power of the right Hand of the most High Who doeth marvels in the heaven above, and showeth signs in the earth beneath: Who driveth away the darkness and poureth light into the heart. This is the mighty power of God alone, who with the blessings of His mercy hath prevented His beloved servant, Gerard, and hath changed him from a lion into a lamb. Before time was He ordained that Gerard should be one with Himself, and in the fullness of time He hath made him ready to preach the Word of good tidings to many cities and peoples, for the glory and honour of His Holy Name.

CHAPTER V

Of his change of garb and character

(1) NOT long afterwards, Gerard began to carry into effect that upon which of his own good will he had determined. So his mind being made sure, and confirmed in Christ, he resigned all his preferments, and changed his secular dress for a simple habit as befitted an humble clerk who prefers the contempt of the world before riches.

A rumour went abroad amongst the people; and many wondering at the strangeness of the matter, spoke to one another saying “What can his reason be, and what change hath befallen him; hath much learning made him mad? Lo! he who formerly went in fair clothing, now is clad in rough and sad coloured wool. He who delighted in feasting and in varied meats, doth now reject pleasant food, and seeketh poor fare; he doth flee from high place, and loveth poverty.” But yet the hand of God was with him, and he began to labour faithfully in the name of the Lord.

(2) Holding the common talk and vain chatter of men in small esteem, Gerard turned himself to God with the strength of his whole heart, for he said, “I have chosen to be an abject in the house of my God rather than to dwell in the tabernacles of sinners”; and so, God working with him, he exchanged riches for poverty, pride for humility, luxury for self-denial, unstableness for a stedfast mind, worldliness for a spiritual life, subtlety for devotion and singlemindedness. While the people were talking and wondering at the sudden change in so great a man, one of his fellow citizens who was of high position came to him secretly, wishing to know more fully the purpose of the reverend master in fleeing from the joyous companionship of the world.

(3) And when he had inquired anxiously of him about many things, and had heard fully the explanation of the mystery of Gerard’s renunciation, he

was so instructed in the matters of which he had doubted, that he went away greatly edified and said: “Why do these ignorant and vulgar folk speak words so senseless of this good and prudent man? Never was he so wise and full of knowledge as when of late he fled from the world and left its ways, and in an humble spirit resolved to be the servant of God. How happy would that man be who should be willing to imitate rather than to insult one who hath done so well. If he shall continue in this good course, he shall be the means of much good.”

CHAPTER VI

How he separated himself from fellowship with worldlings

(1) WEST the holy seed planted in Gerard's heart by God should be trodden under foot of them that passed by, or lying uncovered should be devoured by the fowls of the air; lest the light that was kindled in him should be extinguished by an empty wind, in place of being kept beneath a bushel and nourished by the oil of inward devotion; and lest the tender and fragile reed, being blown about by the breeze of vanity, should be soon bent earthward and not strengthened with power from on High, the humble Gerard resolved to go apart for a time, to separate himself carefully from worldly sights and converse, to release his mind from all the cares of the world, and to be at leisure for the things of God only, and for his own soul. By this means he would first learn in his own person that of which he must afterward become a teacher, and having tasted the sweetness of the things of God, he would more calmly bear adversity for the truth's sake, and not fear the assaults of the Devil which might be brought against him.

(2) He departed therefore from his city, and from his father's house, and came to the country of Gelders to the Carthusian Brothers in Monichuysen whom he loved in the love of Christ. By these he was received with reverence and was given a cell as being a guest worthy to be loved: and entering into it joyfully and eagerly he said in the exultation of his soul with Blessed Peter, "Lord, it is good for us to be here."

There he called back his heart from its former wanderings, there he wiped away the mildew of his old life and restored the image of his inner man to purity—there he broke the rising storms of passion by watching and by fast, and overcame the various assaults of Devils by prayer and tears, saying

with Holy David, “Lo I have gone far off flying away; and I abode in the wilderness. I waited for him that hath saved me from pusillanimity of spirit and a storm.” I too have seen the place of his habitation, in which this light of God, this friend of the Almighty, was hidden for a season, until he should be placed upon a candlestick, that he might show an example of light to all.

CHAPTER VII

Of his abstinence, and the shirt of hair which he wore

(1) THIS new soldier of Christ therefore, fearlessly took his post in the Carthusian Camp: and within he was not overcome by the weariness of his cell, nor abroad was he broken down by the burden of his toil, but as a true son of the Cloister he kept watch over both heart and lips. Moreover he carefully tilled the field of his own heart, making a daily and rigorous inspection of the same, rooting out the thorns of vice and sowing the seeds of virtue.

So Gerard waging spiritual warfare against flesh and blood, was by his retreat strongly armed against himself that he might the more quickly overthrow the Devil, the Ruler of this world and the Prince of Darkness.

He did not pamper himself, as loving luxury, nor spare himself as being weak, nor make excuses for himself as being innocent, nor put off the time of repentance like a careless and lukewarm servant; but mindful of his former evil living, he took unto him the spirit of contrition, and for the name of Jesus, crucified his own flesh with its affections and lusts, desiring to win favour in the sight of Christ. Though his body was frail, he laid upon it frequent fasts; he abstained from flesh (as is the custom of the Carthusian order), and also from many foods which that Custom allows; he prolonged the watches of the night, and drove away the heaviness of sleep from his eyes by standing, by prayer and by genuflexion; and in the spirit of devotion he compelled the body to be a slave to the soul.

(2) He girt his loins with a cloth of hair which was very rough and full of knots that the wantonness of the flesh might not allure him: and he faithfully mortified the body for the soul's sake, constraining his reins with

the firm strength of purity. Thus he truly, and to the very letter fulfilled the words of the prophet in the Psalm, and could justly say, "But as for me, when they were troublesome to me I was clothed with hair-cloth."

"O good Master who were they that were thine enemies in the Cloister?"

"Verily the desires of the flesh, the allurements of the world, and the temptations of the Devil."

"Wondrous is it that in this retreat where thou dwellest far from worldly things thou shouldest have temptations!"

"I am not safe, neither I nor any man who is born in sinful flesh; but that I may not be overcome of depraved affections or moved by evil example I have sought a place of solitude in the greater hope of divine protection. Even Christ Himself was never so openly tempted as when He entered into the desert and fasted from food, and yet He was not disturbed by any human passion. I, therefore, who am a sinner, that I may give the more satisfaction to my God, have withdrawn myself from men and humbled my soul with fasting that my prayer might be turned into mine own bosom."

A certain devout sister, whom Gerard had converted, told me certain things: how that after his death she saw his hair shirt, and touched it with her hands; it was very long and rough and had many knots in it for the infliction of greater punishment upon him.

CHAPTER VIII

How, by the advice of the Monks, he began to preach the word of God

(1) BUT as the devout and learned Master continued in the increase of virtue, and in proportion as Christ grew more sweet to him so much the more did the world become of no account in his sight: and when by the ordinance of God the time of his fruit-bearing was at hand, it was determined by these wise and religious brethren that this burning and shining light should be placed upon a candlestick to give light to them that are of the household of God, in order that by the voice of his preaching, and by the example of his holy conversation he might kindle the hearts of sinners.

It would have been good that a man of such mighty power should be continually at leisure for the things of God and his own soul in the solitude of the Cloister, but they hoped to gain yet greater good and higher glory for God by sending him forth; because a learned man like Gerard who was apt for preaching but less apt for bearing the burden of a Religious order—one moreover who had learned to tread the path of humility by despising all earthly things—would be of profit to more souls by openly preaching the Word of life. By so doing he would bring the greatest gain to Christ and lead many with him to the eternal kingdom; and the more fervently he laboured for the salvation of souls in this present world, so much the more glorious would he be in the world to come.

(2) For three years he devoted himself to study and prayer before he began to preach; thus this faithful herald was furnished with spiritual armour, and with the writings of the Scriptures, that he might announce the good tidings of the Word of God in the cities and villages; he had many

hearers both clerks and lay folk as well as the Religious Orders: men and women; small and great; learned and unlearned; men of high degree and councillors; rulers, slaves and free; rich and poor; men of the land and strangers. When he sounded upon the trumpet of salvation withholding from the ears of his hearers no note that was necessary thereunto, but openly proclaiming the full purpose of God for all men according to their state, condition, sex and age, the hearts of many were moved to flee from before the face of the anger of God, the coming wrath of the last judgement and the final fires of Hell. He “placed the axe to the root of the tree,” according to the saying of the blessed John the Baptist—“Let all men therefore” (said he) “fear the strict judge, abandon sin, and bring forth fruits meet for repentance—let them be forward to do the will of their Holy Creator and appease Him, by being instant in prayer, almsgiving, and fasts.”

Many who heard his discourse were pricked to the heart, and coming to him yielded themselves to his direction, putting away all the vanity of the world. Some also in their zeal for chastity remained virgin, and some who had taken the vow of continency gathered together others with them for the service of God.

(3) But since the righteousness of the good suffereth the envy of evil men, some persons of corrupt mind, lovers of the world and followers of luxurious living, often spoke against Gerard, for they hated the way of truth, and were enemies of every good thing.

These persons secretly defamed the man of God, and sometimes by open railing strove to stir up a tumult against him, and that because he argued with severity against their own vices and crimes: but a yet more wicked thing was done, in that certain priests and prelates and wandering friars thought it unworthy to bear with the teaching of so great a man and with his eagerness for justice to be done upon those that deserted the holy law. They strove therefore to blacken his fame, and to fight down his constancy of purpose, of whom he himself writes in one of his letters. “Many snarling folk are come about me, who rage even as the fire among the thorns, but they do not appear openly.” Wherefore this lover of Christ, this zealot for souls, was neither shaken by the threats of his enemies, nor vexed by the dispraise of them that upbraided him; for he was founded upon a strong rock because he sought not the glory of the world, nor feared to suffer shame for Christ. He was ready indeed for the truth’s sake, and for the

Gospel of God, to yield up both body and soul so as to promote, and wheresoever it might be, to extend His glory. And so blessed be God who raised up for us such a preacher and sent him forth to preach; for it was through him that there shone upon us who are in this lower world, the Light of the Heavenly Life.

CHAPTER IX

Of his labours, and his patience toward his enemies

(1) IT were a long task to tell of the labours which he underwent in preaching, the conflicts of disputation which he maintained against subverters of the faith, and the exhortations which he delivered to strengthen in their holy purposes the brethren and sisters who had given themselves to the devout life. These things are most clearly shown in the letters which he wrote to divers persons for their consolation. Thus he says in one letter written to the priests in Amsterdam, who were very well known to him. “Be not afraid, my most beloved, if ye have heard my evil report from the men of Kempen. All things are turning out as I hope in accordance with the will of God. Let Charity burn within us with no sluggish flame but fiercely. Let us despise these filthy communications and be ensamples of the Most High, to the Glory of our Creator.”

When he perceived that many prelates of the Church were opposed to him, and that his preaching was being hindered by the envy of his enemies, and that he was forbidden to preach by an edict craftily obtained, he yielded in a spirit of humility to this rage and envy, being unwilling to stir up a tumult amongst the people against the clergy. Moreover, he said to the common folk who took ill this inhibition as having been obtained by falsehood: “They are our prelates, and as is fitting and due we wish to obey their edicts; for we seek not to hurt any, nor to stir up a scandal. The Lord well knoweth His own whom He hath chosen from the beginning, and He will also call them by His grace, without our aid, in what manner soever He will.” He therefore held his peace for a time, and meanwhile gave himself to private exhortation, counting out the riches of the Word of Consolation

with an eager heart to all who came to him,—as also the blessed Paul saith: —“and I myself will be spent for your souls, seeking not what is profitable to myself but to many.”

(2) He also caused several books of sacred theology to be written out by the pupils whom he attracted to him by his excellent discourses: he paid them wages, inviting them to come to his own house and hear the Word of God more often, that so he might dispose them to chastity, and to the amending of their lives, by which means they might become partakers of everlasting blessedness, being fashioned to a new and holy life, if they should renounce worldly courses. Meanwhile with Godly prudence he did not pay all their wages at one time, but divided the money into several portions, in order that they might often come, and with such opportunities for intercourse with him might find grace; and these men came the more gladly as they saw beneficent acts of holiness abounding in him—for Gerard earnestly strove to win some of these writers to Christ, a purpose which by the favour of God was shortly brought to pass. He loved to speak with such simple-minded and less learned men rather than with the wise of the world, because the innocent and the needy for the most part give place to the purposes of God more readily than the worldly-wise who trust in their own wisdom. For which things’ sake the prophet David said, “The innocent and the upright have adhered to me because I have waited on Thee.”

(3) A certain man of the order of mendicants, a Religious in garb, but a worker of mischief in speech, began to speak against the venerable Master in many things, and when he could not overcome him, he hastened to the Curia at Rome to bring a suit against this man of God, or by some other crafty device to impose silence upon him: which thing he would have feared to do if he had been moved by the Spirit of God: but the Just Judge, the Lover of peace, ordered things otherwise than as this turbulent person had expected, for being suddenly smitten by sickness while upon his journey, he died; and his whole device fell to the ground and came to naught.

There was another man of the order of preachers who was eloquent in discourse and had the fame and dignity of one in great esteem. This man having heard of the bright reputation of the venerable Master, rejoiced with exceeding charity thereupon, and congratulated Gerard with sincerity of mind. He sent him a friendly letter composed in elegant language, speaking

highly of the good work which Gerard had begun, and urging him not to be broken down by the assaults of froward men, but to trust in God and stand firm, and to refresh Christian people with yet more copious draughts of the water that floweth from Heaven. Having heard this and having read the letter, the Master, who was tried in many things, embraced the writer, his fellow-worker in holy exhortation, with the arms of charity, and was strengthened by his letter, as by an oracle of God, for the work of preaching.

CHAPTER X

Of his journey to the parts about Brabant

(1) THE pious and humble Master Gerard, hearing of the great and widespread fame of John Ruysbroek, a monk and Prior of the Monastery of Grünthal, near Brussels, went to the parts about Brabant, although the journey was long, in order to see in bodily presence this holy and most devout father; for he longed to see face to face, and with his own eyes, one whom he had known hitherto only by common report and by his books; and to hear with his own ears that voice utter its words from a living human mouth—a voice as gracious as if it were the very mouthpiece of the Holy Ghost, He took with him therefore that revered man Master John Cele, the director of the School of Zwolle, a devout and faithful lover of Jesus Christ; for their mind and heart were at one in the Lord, and the fellowship of each was pleasant to the other, and this resolve was kindled within them that their journey, which was undertaken for the sake of spiritual edification, should redound in the case of each to the Glory of God.

(2) There went also with them a faithful and devout layman, named Gerard the shoemaker, as their guide upon the narrow way, and their inseparable companion in this happy undertaking.

When they came to the place called Grünthal, they saw no lofty or elaborate buildings therein, but rather all the signs of simplicity of life and poverty, such as marked the first footsteps of our Heavenly King when He, the Lord of Heaven, came upon this earth as a Virgin's Son, and in exceeding poverty. As they entered the gate of the monastery, that holy father, the devout Prior, met them, being a man of great age, of kindly serenity, and one to be revered for his honourable character. He it was whom they had come to see, and saluting them with the greatest benignity as they advanced, and being taught by a revelation from God, he called

upon Gerard by his very name and knew him, though he had never seen him before. After this salutation he took them with him into the inner parts of the cloister, as his most honoured guests, and with a cheerful countenance, and a heart yet more joyful showed them all due courtesy and kindness as if he were entertaining Jesus Christ Himself.

(3) Gerard abode there for a few days conferring with this man of God about the Holy Scriptures; and from him he heard many heavenly secrets which, as he confessed, were past his understanding, so that in amazement he said, with the Queen of Sheba, “O excellent father, thy wisdom and thy knowledge exceedeth the fame which I heard in mine own land; for by thy virtues thou hast surpassed thy fame.” After this he returned with his companions to his own city greatly edified; and being as it were a purified creature, he pondered over what he had heard in his mind, and often dwelt thereon in his heart: also he committed some of Ruysbroek’s sayings to writing, that they might not be forgotten.

God also revealed to Gerard the death of this most beloved father, which revelation he made manifest in the hearing of many of the citizens by the tolling of the bells: and more privately, showed to certain of his friends that the soul of the Prior, after but one hour of Purgatory had passed to the glory of heaven.

Gerard himself did not long survive, for when the third year after these things was almost past, there came the time appointed for him to die, and at the call of God he paid the debt of the flesh.

This sojourn on his visit to the Prior was not a time of idleness, nor was the discourse of so holy a father barren; but the instruction of his living voice gave nurture to a fuller love, and an increase of fresh zeal, as he testifies in a letter which he sent to these same brethren in the Grünthal, saying “I earnestly desire to be commended to your director and Prior, the footstool of whose feet I would fain be both in this life, and in the life to come; for my heart is welded to him beyond all other men by love and reverence. I do still burn and sigh for your presence, to be renewed and inspired by your spirit and to be a partaker thereof.”

CHAPTER XI

Of his austerity in food and clothing

(1) I WILL describe in a few words the manner of his private life, for he laid down for himself a rule, and has described in his writings many exercises of devotion.

He was very temperate in the matter of food, and it was his custom to be satisfied almost always with but one meal in the day. He so regulated his need of sleep, that he thought that seven hours of rest were enough. He would not eat, save in his own house, by whomsoever he might be invited, for he avoided intercourse with worldly men and also those lengthy banquets in which rich men indulge themselves to the loss of the poor. So strictly did he abide by his rule, that none dared to invite him or to trouble him with importunities: and this rule being well known was so pleasing to the good as to take away any handle of malicious accusation from the wicked.

Nevertheless he invited to his frugal table certain poor servants of God, and sometimes one or two of the honourable burghers, so as to instruct them in a better life: and these he regaled rather with the sweets of heavenly discourse than with carefully prepared courses of meats, for such he by no means provided. But whether he were alone, or were entertaining a guest, the reading of some holy book preceded the meal, and edifying discourse flowed from his honeyed tongue; but on other matters he strictly held his peace.

(2) Laughter and jesting were far removed from his mouth, and still farther the blemishes of slanderous talk and worldly gossip which pertained not to the matter in hand. His conversation was seasoned with salt, and thoughts of devotion to God, and the health of the soul gave to his food a savour beyond that of any pleasant meat. He ever remembered as he sat at

meat the heavenly table in the kingdom of God, and the sweet fellowship of the Saints which should follow our long exile in this present world. Thus he sent away his guests joyful in the Lord, and having their hearts pricked. He had a refectory of modest size, in which a few guests could sit with him, where near at hand and over against the table there stood a case filled with most excellent books to serve as it were for a wine-cellar, so that if the fare for the body were not pleasing, he might from this abundant supply put before his friends a draught of wine for the soul. He often ate food that was unseasoned or burned, and that not with impatience, but with giving of thanks, and as discharging the debt and paying the penalty for his former sumptuous living.

(3) He used to prepare his food with his own hands, though he had no skill in cookery, and he refused to accept the services of the sisters who dwelt apart in a neighbouring building: if anything needed to be bought in the market, these looked to it for him; but he allowed no one of them to enter into his dwelling, but was content with the ministration of a single clerk. Both within his house and abroad he arranged everything with a view to honesty and good report, and lest aught that might cause suspicion should be observed, he would not speak to any one of the nuns, save behind a closed and curtained window. Things that were given him, or brought for his use, were pushed in by means of a wheeled vehicle—wherefore one of his pupils, seeing him so closely guarded, inquired privately of him concerning the matter, and said:

“Why, good master, dost thou so carefully veil thy window?” and Gerard answered, “If I could, I would protect mine ears also that I might not hear the voices of women, for indeed excess of caution can do us no hurt; every cause of stumbling and danger to the weak cometh by lack of guard over the bodily sense, and from too much freedom of intercourse. He, therefore, that would preserve his integrity, let him keep his eyes and his ears in subjection, for only upon urgent necessity should one be so indiscreet as to speak with a woman.”

(4) He observed with the greatest strictness the fasts of Holy Church. On Fridays he abstained altogether from foods made with milk, and often on that day used salt as a condiment instead of oil. He seldom washed his plate, but wiped it with bread, or left it for a dog or for mice to lick, and he did not despise mouldy bread. On the fifth day of the week by reason of the

coming Friday he washed all his vessels in water, to remove from them every trace of fat by way of penance. Therefore he was pleasing in the sight of God, by being content with the simple and bare necessities of life, by cutting off what is superfluous and not requiring luxuries. Towards himself he was austere and churlish, towards others kindly and pitiful.

(5) His garb was gray in colour and made in humble fashion, being neither soft nor gay, nor arranged in elaborate folds, and he seldom had new garments, for when his clothes were worn by age he had them patched and mended, nor was he ashamed, although a man of good birth, to be seen amongst his friends and fellow-citizens in vile raiment. He wore a tattered cloak mended with many patches, like to those worn by the poor and by beggars: a garment like to be despised by the rich, but a pattern to the devout, and worthy to be held in pious memory by them that come after. None of his raiment indeed was of great price, yet his merit in wearing the same was by no means small. All his adorning was the inner adorning of the heart, wherefore he looked not to the aspect of his outer man: and now he rejoiced to be clad in garments which once he would have thought scarce worth a glance. Oh! noble man, who wast not clad in soft raiment, but like John wast girt with a rough shirt of hair, and, like Christ, robed in the cloak of holy poverty.

(6) He was asked once by a familiar friend why he wore so old and patched a garment, which any labouring man might blush to wear, and he replied in his own gracious and pleasant manner: "In this I look to mine own convenience; the patches are there to prevent me from suffering cold, and that the wind may not blow through the rents, as it would if they were not closed up." The brother hearing this was greatly edified, perceiving that Gerard sought not to please the world, but rather God only. He was also asked about his cloak and doublet, how old they were, to which he replied: "This thicker garment which I wear outside, is more than nine years old, but this thinner one, which I wear beneath it, I have had for two years only." "And how long," said his questioner, "hast thou worn thy doublet?" To which Gerard replied, "One of them is twelve years old, the other only three." Thus he could say with holy David in his faithful prayers to God, "See my abjection and my labour, and forgive me all my sins."

(7) The humble Master following after poverty, remembered what manner of man he had been while in the world when he had loved luxury;

wherefore it behoved him in justice to make amends for his former courses by the opposite manner of living; of old he used to go forth clad in fair attire and with a silvern girdle: and while among the canons, he had worn a sumptuous surplice and a fair almuce: likewise he had indulged his body with delicate food and with costly wines; but afterward being changed into another man, he did not suffer his former indulgences to go unpunished. He prostrated himself beneath the feet not only of his elders and men in high esteem, but also beneath those of the youngest lay folk, sometimes eating in their presence upon the bare earth, for he said, "I am not worthy to sit at meat with you, for I am a sinner beyond all men and have offended God." He who had been wont to anoint his head, and delicately to tire his hair, would afterward in his own despite wear an old moth-eaten biretta which was pierced with near to an hundred holes. Thus he did great violence upon himself, subdued the flesh, despised the world and bruised the head of the old Serpent, not permitting his passions to rule over him. He ever walked upon the path of humility under the leadership of Christ, and conformed his life by rule to the pattern of the Saints of old.

CHAPTER XII

Of his devoutness in prayer and in hearing Holy things

(1) WHO can tell how devout and fervent he showed himself in prayer? Often while reciting the “Hours” he broke forth with the voice of joy through the superabundance of grace which was shed upon him, and in sweet sounding hymns poured forth his inward rejoicing; and as he sang softly within his heart, his spirit, as a flame, was borne upward to God. He had more delight in holy discourse and devout prayer than he had had of old in worldly revellings or in the varied strains of singing men. He had one John of Zutphen to minister to him, who was surnamed Brinckerinc, a devout clerk of stablished character and one dedicated to God from his youth: he was wont to recite the “Hours” with Gerard, and to accompany him hither and thither when he preached, and Gerard loved him with the love of a father for his son, for indeed he was a youth of an excellent spirit, well beloved of God and man, and scarcely could be torn from his master’s side.

(2) Upon a time when they had made an end of reading the “Hours,” Gerard said to him: “Of what thinkest thou? Understandest thou what thou readest? Tell me what is in thy mind.” But he replied to his master: “How should I understand except some man should guide me.” Then said Gerard to his disciple: “To me there come divers and mystic interpretations, and they lead my mind secretly from one meaning to another so that I could feel no weariness in reading, but should rejoice to dwell some while longer upon these good words.” When he was upon a journey and had been received into a guest chamber, after saying Compline he spoke to his two companions, Florentius and the aforesaid John: “Let us say each one of us

our daily suffrages”; and this too was a pious custom with them, that each one should tell the other of his own failings if he had seen anything worthy of blame in himself: they freely admonished one another in turn, gladly submitting themselves to censure, and acknowledging their sins with humility asked pardon therefor; and being thus corrected in brotherly love, they went to rest.

(3) Once when the people of Deventer were going out armed against their enemies, this man of God prayed earnestly for the safety of his fellow citizens, and it happened by a dispensation of God that as the foe drew near, a thick cloud rose between the armies by which the opposing host was terrified and took to flight, but the men of Deventer returned to their city with speed and in safety—for the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

Every morning before he began to be about his worldly business, or to reply to those who questioned him, he would rekindle his mind by reading the Scriptures, for he ever studied to preface all that he should do with devout meditations and prayers according to that saying of the Psalmist: “My eyes to Thee have prevented the morning that I might meditate on thy words.”

(4) It was his rule to hear Mass daily with deep reverence and due devotion, seeking first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and afterward devoting himself to the service of his neighbour, thus in this twofold duty he held to the right path, as it is said in the book of Canticles: “He set in order charity in me.” When he entered a Church he did not stand up to gaze upon the painted windows in the walls overhead, but bent the knee with humility before God, and prostrated himself in prayer; and he would hold no converse there, but delighted only to hear the praises of God, or to read the “Hours,” for he avoided every idle word in the Temple of the Almighty. Lest his devotion might be disturbed by the concourse of men, or his secret converse with God be observed of bystanders, he secured a secluded and private place among the Friars-minor, and there alone and in secret he lay prostrate in prayer, gazing upon and adoring the Holy Sacrament of the Altar: for there was a small window through which the several altars could be seen. Here with prayers and groaning he knocked at the gate of Heaven, beating upon his breast most grievously, like the Publican, beseeching God to be propitious to him, and to pardon his past

sins; to cleanse him from evil and the passions which threatened him; and to protect him from further perils by the bestowal of His Fatherly care, as in times past.

(5) He was so eminent for devotion and meditation as to earn the comfort of a revelation from God, and the instruction of a spirit of prophecy as to future events. Thus he consoled one of his pupils, who was sad by reason of the long continued absence of a brother, with the tidings that he should soon come to him, “for thy brother is well,” said Gerard, “and will come shortly”; and so it came to pass. He also foretold of certain brothers who clung to him, that some of them should be promoted to the priesthood and some should take upon them the profession of the Religious Life. Once, being inflamed by a mighty longing for Eternal Life, he said to one of his pupils: “What further can I do here? would that I were with my Lord in Heaven”; and the brother answered him, saying: “Beloved Master, we cannot yet do without thy presence; who would instruct us as thou dost, and strive so earnestly on our behalf? We are few and feeble, and these worldlings perchance might soon put us to rout”; but Gerard again confidently affirmed: “I will ask the Father for you, that your devotion fail not, for it is a tree that the Lord hath planted upon this earth; I hope that this small beginning shall come to a great issue.” God of His goodness shall provide for Himself another fitting man instead of me, who without doubt shall take his place as a buttress to the House of the Lord.

CHAPTER XIII

Of his great love of reading the Holy Scriptures

(1) THIS reverend doctor was possessed by a great love of reading the Holy Scriptures, and by an untiring zeal in collecting the books of learned men rather than treasures of money, whereof he bears witness in a letter, saying: “I am ever covetous, yea, more than covetous, of books, and if I lack them I am useless”; for although he was more learned than many doctors, he did not desire honour on that account, but he was the comforter of them that sorrowed, and ever the faithful helper of all who wished to serve God. He was instant in searching again and again the passages that he had read, and to dark sayings he gave yet more careful study so as to become continually better and more apt to take hold upon holy things. He was not ashamed to learn from younger men, nor to ask them questions, for he knew that which is written: “The declaration of Thy words giveth light, and giveth understanding to little ones”; wherefore he showed himself right easy of access and kindly to such men, and indeed chose rather to seek counsel from another, than to work out by himself many interpretations; for he said: “If a boy can teach me a fuller knowledge of the will of God, how much more gladly would I listen to him, rather than strive after some new doctrine by myself and without counsel from any man.”

(2) He was therefore earnest in reading the Scriptures, but was not careful to possess books beautifully adorned; the Breviary from which he read his “Hours” was of no great value since he avoided using anything that was outwardly splendid or that savoured not of simplicity: so when he saw one who had a book sumptuously ornamented, and noted how carefully the owner looked to it and turned the leaves, he said to him: “I had rather that a

book were my servant, than be servant to a book; books should serve the interests of their reader's mind, not the nice taste of him who doth look at them"; for this reason the devout master gave more attention to the matter of a book than to the outward beauty of an embellished copy; so, too, the Blessed Jerome preferred to have a well corrected text, though the form of the book might be of small value, rather than a beautifully ornamented but incorrect copy. Yet it is a decent custom and to be commended as tending to the honour of God, and to the adornment of His Church which flourisheth over all the world, that the books of Holy Scripture, and those that are used in Divine Service should be somewhat sumptuously written, and be preserved from all taint of dust and defilement. So may they minister to many that are faithful in the peace of the Catholic Faith both of this and coming generations; and may stir the dull of heart to read more earnestly; and the books shall abide long with us because they are known to have been bought at a great price, and to have been written with great labour.

(3) He was not only assiduous in reading the sacred books, but also wrote carefully, and published at the earnest desire of others, certain short works based upon the genuine sayings of the Saints for the use of them who sought his guidance, that he might teach those whom he could not reach in person and instruct by word of mouth. Amongst other works he wrote several notable letters, a collection of which is preserved and read for a worthy memorial of him. He had knowledge of all the liberal arts conjoined to a close acquaintance with Holy Scripture; a natural genius which was very keen and adorned by the light of the grace of God: a skilful tongue, fluent eloquence in exhortation, and a tenacious memory; so that there was scarcely known his equal in so many branches of knowledge or one so earnest and devout in holy conversation. Yet illustrious as he was for his special knowledge in matters of learning both human and divine, he was none the less humble and submissive in rendering honour to his superiors and to rulers of the Church. He was well disposed to study the simple and devout words of others: in speech he was circumspect; in writing, ready; in self-examination, scrupulous; in business committed to him, prompt and faithful. Lest he should forget what he ought to do or say when occasion came, he used to write at once upon the blank leaves or margins of his books and pamphlets clear notes upon the business in hand. Thus he kept carefully in readiness full records of all that he said for the overthrowing of

the envious who were ever laying snares for him in many ways; and this he did that he might have at hand matter wherewith to answer the snarls of his detractors, should any necessity arise.

(4) A certain prelate of the Church, an enemy to Gerard, disputed with him, and argued against some of his writings as if the master were less wise than he: for he himself did not perceive by what a plague of jealousy he was troubled. Then the man of God, knowing his own innocence, brought forward a great number of his letters, asserting that those things which were objected against him were not written by him, nor did they agree with what he had written. “Consider, Sirs,” said he, “what sort of letters ye have received or sent: lo! here is the full number and collection of letters which I have written with mine own hand—as these speak, so speak I—these I maintain and for these I answer”; and by the ready production of these letters the mouth of him that spoke evil of Gerard was stopped; and the famous master by his assertion of the Truth, was promoted to even greater honour in the minds of many who stood by. For the truth shall always prevail, though it is often spoken against by the ignorant.

(5) It is said that Gerard had been skilled in astrology and necromancy, and before his conversion had been in the habit of displaying some few of the tricks of the art of magic: but I have learned from two of his pupils that more than these cannot be charged to him, for when one of these pupils asked him the truth of the matter, he said: “I did indeed learn the theory of that art, and I read and possessed books upon it, but I had no dealings with the follies of magical practice.” Moreover a faithful pupil of Gerard, who was also a devout priest, added for my further information on this questionable matter the following explanation. “There are,” he said, “two kinds of necromancy, of which one is called ‘natural.’ This kind is a most recondite study, and its difference from the second kind (which is called ‘diabolic’ and is forbidden by law), is perceived by but few persons. Gerard was learned in the natural kind, but I believe that he had not studied the other, nor had made any compact with the Devil.” But in what way soever his connection with this science came about, and whether he had dealings or commerce therewith in jest or in earnest, he washed away and purged any foolishness or defilement that might have clung to him therefrom, by bringing forth fruits meet for repentance when he was wholly turned to God. In witness of this when smitten with sickness he renounced all

unlawful arts in the presence of a priest, and gave the books that dealt of such vanities to be burned in the fire.

(6) Let us recognize in all these things the immeasurable depth of the Fatherly love of God; and see how the Almighty doth suffer some men to be ensnared by the more grievous sins and by wrongful habits, but at length of His secret purposes, making manifest a yet greater compassion for them, doth restore to life those that were lost, and raiseth the fallen to repentance. He doth grant them not only pardon for past sins, but also a store of higher grace when they are wholly turned to Him, and are striving to be profitable servants. He knoweth how to convert the provocations devised by the Devil for the confusion and ruin of man, into means of earning a crown of greater glory. If there is joy in the presence of the angels over one sinner that repenteth, how great a joy must there have been over Gerard, who not only repented of his own sins, but also by his example and precept turned so many other sinners to repentance, and laboured to draw a great company of faithful people to the Kingdom of Heaven.

CHAPTER XIV

Of the abundant fruit which he bore in the conversion of men

(1) INASMUCH as every tree is known by his fruit, as Christ Himself beareth witness, I must now declare how rich and how abundant were the fruits of godliness which this tree bore during the short season of his preaching. I think that venerable and learned Master is worthy to be compared to three trees above all others; to the fertile olive, to the lofty cedar, and to the flourishing palm. For he, being planted like a fruitful tree by the water side, brought forth in his season most excellent increase to God. Moreover, as a stream running over with the waters of the Scriptures, he irrigated the vineyard of the Lord God of Sabaoth abundantly, whence the clusters of devout life, and the green leaves of good works were increased to the Glory of God our Saviour. This man of God was no barren stock, nor a forest tree whose leaf falleth, like the oak; but in very truth he flourished abundantly, like some fair olive in the field, as a noble cedar aloft in Libanus, and as a goodly palm upon the hill of Zion. The merciful God bestowed great grace upon him, which he received not with an empty heart, but used the same to the bringing forth of good works; he, therefore, who had been aforetime an occasion of error to many and a companion of the foolish, now became an ensample of virtue to all. The more he perceived how grievously he had erred in the paths of evil, so much the more humble did he now become, and the more zealous to tread in the right way. Wherefore being renewed and set on fire by the Spirit of God he was instant to be more diligent in works of mercy, in succouring his neighbours (being moved thereto by deep compassion); in preaching the Word of Salvation to the peoples; in administering, like a holy physician of souls, the comfort of

Divine consolation to the sorrowful and the tempted: and in recalling back-sliders to their former earnestness of mind by frequent exhortation, prayer and lamentation.

(2) Because he had obtained great mercy from the Lord, and with true charity was eager to share the same liberally, and whensoever he could, with his neighbour, he might justly say with the holy poet David: "But I have borne fruit like an olive tree in the house of the Lord: I have hoped in the Mercy of God for ever." He was not hard of heart and pitiless like that wicked servant who, though all his own debt was forgiven him, had not compassion upon his fellow servant: but from the beginning of his conversion, he forgave every debt of those that trespassed against him; prayed earnestly for those that slandered him; was ready to be beforehand in giving satisfaction if he had offended any, and to live peaceably with all so that the defence of the Truth were not endangered. Nor did he, like that slothful servant, hide his Lord's money, looking only to his own convenience; but the gift of learning, and that talent which was entrusted to him he faithfully put out to earn an usury of souls. Rightly then is he compared to a fruitful olive, for he poured forth upon his neighbour in holy abundance the oil of mercy which he had received from God. But he put on bowels of mercy chiefly toward indigent clerks, lone widows, and virgins who preserved their chastity, and upon these he expended the anxious care of a father; also he studied to minister to the necessities of them that lacked both by his own efforts and through others, giving them whatsoever help and consolation he could.

(3) With reason, too, is he compared to a lofty cedar that groweth upward, because by his contempt of all earthly things and his contemplation of the Eternal, he grew toward Heaven: and knowing his own frailty, he rooted his heart in the depths of humility, and in proportion as his roots became finer and more deeply planted, so did he spread the more widely above. Although he was endowed with so much knowledge, and was in so great reputation with the famous doctors of his time, he nevertheless despised every pinnacle of worldly honour, and kept himself simple in bearing, so that anyone who did not know him would scarcely have given heed to, or saluted him.

Well, too, is the Master likened to a flourishing palm tree, for with the leaves of this were victors and fighters of old wont to be crowned; and, like

them, Gerard strove against and overcame his enemies, that is, men guilty of heresies, simony, usury, self-seeking, lust, and the other various monsters of wickedness, enduring many labours and using the writings of the Scriptures as the weapons wherewith he was armed. Therefore was he worthy to be crowned with the palm of everlasting bliss, and to be commended of faithful people with due reverence and praise. Behold him! an Israelite indeed, a most devoted preacher and champion of sound doctrine: one who so loved God as not to neglect his neighbour: who so lifted his mind to the things of Heaven as not to be backward in ministering to the necessities of others, who moreover busied himself in looking not to his own salvation only but to the weal of many, and in leading them with him to the more perfect life.

(4) He was of a cheerful countenance, and in speech kindly; calm in mind and humble in clothing; in food abstinent, in counsel wise, in judgement discreet. Towards evil he was stern, toward virtue zealous. Fleeing from idleness he ever exercised himself with something profitable to edification: he loved simplicity and followed lowliness, thinking upon heavenly things. He was apt to understand hidden matters, and was never too much occupied for reading and prayer. Having God ever before his eyes he jealously guarded the rights of the Church. He set a good example to men of the world, seeking no temporal advantage from his preaching, thinking only of the profit of souls, and preaching the Gospel without price and without money from the Church. Thus though his life was not long, nor crowned with age, yet in his short season he brought forth abundant fruit by his preaching, and left behind him in divers places most devout disciples and brothers whom he had first faithfully built up and set on fire by the grace of that new light wherewith he himself was filled.

CHAPTER XV

Of the devout communities and monasteries which arose through him

(1) THE everlasting wisdom of the Father, and His mercy from on High provided that there should be sent so great and good a man as Gerard as an ambassador from Heaven to a world which was now growing old and ever turning to yet more evil courses: one who had put on the breastplate of faith and was sustained by righteousness of life, so that, through him, Holy Religion might be made to flourish again, and the devotion of Christian people, being oft instructed by his discourses, might again grow warm, continue in the worship of God and the observance of His commandments, and show works of mercy toward the poor. To resist the malice of so many enemies, and to call souls that were perishing out of the deep darkness of sin into the light of Truth should seem to be a work for no unskilled man; but Gerard was deeply learned, one, moreover, who had made trial of many things, and to him the Grace of God gave the power of the word: for he was most fully instructed in heavenly doctrine and excelled other men in the virtue of his life: thus he was able to persuade his hearers to despise the world not only by words of human wisdom but even more by the example of his godly conversation.

Such was the inclination amongst the people to hear the Word of God, that the Church could scarcely contain the crowd that came together. Many left their food, and being drawn by an hunger after righteousness postponed their urgent business and ran together to hear his discourses: he often delivered two sermons in one day, and sometimes continued preaching for three hours or more when fervency of spirit took hold upon him. He preached in the chief cities of the diocese of Utrecht, Deventer and Zwolle;

in Kempen often, and in Utrecht itself before the assembled clergy; in the country of Holland at Leyden, Delft and Ghent; in Amsterdam (where he delivered his first sermon in the vulgar tongue) and in various other towns and well-known villages where he hoped to gather fruit and to bring forth new children for God. Blessed be God, Who sending His Holy Spirit from Above kindled the hearts of His faithful people, and mightily increased them, so that from the seed of a few converts there grew many companies of devout brethren and sisters who served God in chastity; and to them several monasteries of monks and holy nuns owed the origin of their Godly life.

(2) It is the great glory of Master Gerard that by his preaching so great a tree was planted and watered, a tree which after his death, though but newly set in the ground, ceased not to flourish in the field of the Lord. Although this religious order and these communities of devout persons were first planted in the nearer parts of Holland, Gelders and Brabant, they afterwards spread rapidly to the more remote regions of Flanders, Frisia, Westphalia and Saxony, for God prospered them, and the sweet savour of their good reputation reached even to the Apostolic See.

Now the venerable Master Gerard, being filled with the Holy Ghost, and perceiving that by little and little the number of his disciples was increasing, and that they were burning with zeal for heavenly warfare, took due care and forethought that the devout might come together from time to time into one house for mutual exhortation, and that they might deal faithfully with one another of the things pertaining to God and to the keeping of the law of Charity: and he ordained that if any should wish to abide continually together, they should earn their own living by the labour of their hands, and, as far as might be, live in common under the discipline of the Church. He allowed none to beg in the public ways unless compelled by evident necessity, nor toilsomely to go round from house to house to obtain alms, but rather he ordered them to remain at home, and, as St. Paul taught, to be diligent in the labour of their hands, but not to engage in any business which might hinder their devotion in the hope of greater gain, lest at the instigation of the Devil there might be given to the weak some occasion of falling back into their former naughty ways.

(3) He had it in mind to build a Monastery for Clerks of the order of Regular Canons, for he wished to move some of those Clerks who followed

him and were fitted for such a life, to take the Religious habit in order that they might serve as an example to other devout persons, and show the way of holiness to any clerks or lay folk that came from elsewhere.

He was moved to institute this religious order chiefly by the especial love and reverence he had for that venerable John Ruysbroek, the first prior of Grünthal, and for the other brethren in the same place, who lived the Religious life and were without reproach. These were they whom he had visited in person in Brabant; in them he observed and from them derived, a mode of life greatly tending to edification by reason of their deep humility and the wearing of a simple garb.

But although he busied himself with all diligence to find a place and a monastery fitted for the Religious Life, he could not accomplish the end which he desired, for death was beforehand with him; yet in the sight of God the King immortal, invisible, the Founder of all things, the intention was counted as if it were the fulfilment of his design, and he bequeathed his desire to build a religious house to those most beloved disciples whom he had converted, exhorting them not to let so great a purpose fall into forgetfulness when he was dead, but to unite in lending their aid and counsel in carrying it out so as to further the Glory of God. Some of these disciples were they who dwelt in the Monastery of Windesheim, and also they who with the help of God first founded the house of Agnietenburg near Zwolle.

CHAPTER XVI

Of his happy death and burial

(1) THIS faithful and prudent servant of the Lord perceiving that the end of his days was at hand—for he was smitten by the bolt that must fall upon all men—asked for and received the Viaticum of Salvation. He bore with patience the stroke from the Hand of the Lord, and like the elect, strove not to avoid His scourge, knowing that the more humbly and gladly he bore this present chastisement, the more readily should he appease the wrath of the Judge Almighty. Resigning himself therefore wholly to the Divine Will, and readily submitting himself to the ordinance from above, he committed the issue of his strife to God in faith and spoke these few words to the brethren who stood about him:

“Lo! I am called of the Lord, and the time of my dissolution is at hand. Augustine and Bernard are knocking at the door; and I may not go beyond the bounds which God hath set to my life. I must pay the debt of the flesh like other mortals; may God protect my going forth, and may my spirit return to Him Who gave it; let the earth cover this poor body which was taken from it, but might not long abide thereon; and may He for Whose love I have laboured, written, and preached, grant that I find peace after death.”

(2) But his disciples were grieved to the heart, and said to him with bitter sighing: “What shall we do from henceforth, and who shall teach us in time to come? Thou hast been our father and our defender, and hast drawn us to God.” Now shall our adversaries rejoice, and they of the world shall laugh us to scorn, saying: “These have no leader nor chief, therefore shall they soon be brought to naught.” If when thou wert here they dared to mock us and speak evil of us, what shall they do when thou art gone? Let prayers for us fall from thy lips, and bring aid speedily to the sons whom thou dost

leave behind. "Through thy counsel have we begun to amend; help us that we may persevere."

The good and pitiful Master, seeing that the hearts of his sons were in heavy sorrow for his departure, gave them kindly comfort, saying: "Have faith in God, my most beloved, nor fear them of the world that prate against you. Stand firm in your holy purpose, for God shall be with you where ye are; man shall not prevail to break down that which God hath determined shall be builded. So soon as I am come to God, I hope I shall cast down upon you flowers out of Heaven, that ye may know the Grace of God and produce fruit in the world; and to Him and to His saints do I commend you all."

(3) "Behold Florentius, my beloved disciple, in whom the Holy Spirit hath found a resting place, shall be to you a father and ruler. Take him in my stead, hear him, and obey his counsel. I know none like him, none whom I esteem so highly, or in whom I have such confidence. Him must ye love and reverence as a father."

Thus with kindly words did he comfort his disciples in their bitter grief, promising that the help of God should be most surely with them. As a bequest he left them neither gold nor silver nor rich estates, but only his holy books, his few poor garments, and some worthless and ancient vessels in token of his contempt of the world, and to help them the more easily to strive after the Kingdom of God.

At this time there came also to him certain devout scholars who had been smitten with the sickness of the Plague, desiring to hear from him some wholesome word as a medicine for their souls. To these he spoke with clemency, saying: "By continuing ever in the Service of God, if ye are well disposed thereunto, ye can meet death with confidence; all those lectures which ye have heard shall be counted to you as prayers to God, by reason of the pious intention which ye have had toward Him in your studies."

Hearing this the young men were comforted, and returning to their own hospice, departed this life having made a good confession, commending their souls, which were redeemed by the Blood of Christ, to God and to the Holy Angels.

(4) After the Festival of the Assumption of the Blessed Mary, ever Virgin, when the Feastday of St. Bernard (to whom Gerard was especially devoted) had dawned, this reverend father, then in the forty-fourth year of his age,

delivered up to God his soul fortified by the Sacraments of the Church, made precious by faith, and ennobled by many virtues. He died as the sun was sinking, between the fifth and sixth hours in the thirteen hundred and eighty-fourth year after our Lord's Incarnation, during the reign of Pope Urban the Sixth, and while that most revered lord Florentius de Wevelichoven was Bishop of Utrecht, a notable man and adorned by many excellent deeds.

(5) When the sad report of his death went forth to the people, many faithful persons came together to attend the burying of a man so worthy of love, and so devoted to God: and the monks and nuns shed pious tears performing the due rites for the departed, with prayer and the celebration of Masses according to custom. Every rite of the Church being duly performed, his body was carried to the Church of the Blessed Mary, and was reverently buried therein, where, as all men know, his living voice had often preached the Word of God. There he rests in peace, not far from the Sanctuary, to rise with the rest of the faithful on the last day, through the merits of Jesus Christ our Lord who shall judge both the quick and the dead, and this world with fire.

These words concerning a few out of the many glorious acts of the reverend Master Gerard have been written for the edification of the brethren who now are, or in time to come shall be, of our community: may they tend to the Glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I ask pardon for any error or defect in my discourse, for I know mine own unskilfulness and submit myself humbly to the correction of the brethren, attributing to the Grace of God any good thing that may be found herein written.

(6) (A novice speaks)

“Most gladly do I hear these things, and feel that as it were a new spirit of devotion is born in me thereby. Oh! that many Masters like to him could now be found, who should be constrained to inform the Church of God by their excellent example and doctrine. Therefore I shall hold in greater reverence and love this noble man who hath been until now unknown to me: and wheresoever I shall find treatises written by him or concerning his deeds, I shall take heed to read the same carefully and diligently to search them out. But I pray if thou dost know any other memorable things

concerning him, that thou wilt impart them to me before thou dost go forward to further matters.”

(7) (The elder Brother answers him.)

“Although I am hastening to write of other things, yet that I may satisfy thy longing by a few words, hear now what a doctor of Theology, a Cantor at Paris, who formerly knew Gerard well, writes about him, and with how great praise he lauds him now that he is dead.”

CHAPTER XVII

Of the noble eulogy passed upon Gerard by a Cantor at Paris

(1) MASTER GERARD of holy memory, he who was called “The Great,” has passed happily to the Lord. Truly he was “The Great,” for in his knowledge of all the liberal sciences, both natural and moral, of civil law, canon law and of theology, he was second to no one in the world, and all these branches of learning were united in him.

He was a man of such saintliness and gave so good an example in his mortification of the flesh; his refusal of temporal advantages; his contempt for the world; his brotherly love for all; his zeal for the salvation of souls; his effectual preaching; his reprobation and hatred of wickedness; his withstanding of heretics; his enforcement of the canon law against those that broke the vow of chastity; his conversion to the spiritual life of divers men and women who had formerly lived according to the world; and his loyalty to our lord Urban the Sixth—in all those things I say he gave so good an example, that many thousands of men testify to the belief that is in them that he was not less great in these virtues than he was in the aforesaid sciences. Master William de Salvarvilla, Cantor at Paris, Archdeacon of Brabant in the Church of Liège, an eminent doctor in Theology, compiled the above eulogy from that which he heard from the lips of men worthy of credit, and from his own knowledge of Master Gerard, and he believes beyond all doubt that it is true.

(2) (The novice.)

“The words of this doctor as to the praise justly due to Master Gerard, the first founder of our Brotherhood, agree with what thou hast written. For that which the doctor hath written as a brief summary, thou hast told at greater

length—wherefore the more testimonies I hear of that revered man, the more do I rejoice, and give the greater credence to his sayings.”

(2) (The elder Brother.)

“That thou mayest be fashioned to a knowledge of the faithful Master not by the testimony of others only, I will set forth certain of the very words of his mouth. So shalt thou know clearly what he taught and openly declared during his lifetime, when thou dost read his public profession of faith.”

CHAPTER XVIII

Of his public profession of faith, and of his delivering the true Gospel in his preaching

(1) I GERARD, who am called in the vulgar tongue “Groote,” do declare in the presence of God Almighty and all the Saints, and before you and all men, that in regard to those things that are of faith, I have steadfastly preached and defended that faith which is certain, pure, and Catholic, resting upon Jesus Christ Himself Who is the chief corner Stone. Likewise that I have taught and spread abroad like seed, those doctrines and methods that are wholesome for morals, sure, undoubted, evangelical and apostolic, following the Divinely inspired Scriptures and the interpretation and meaning given thereunto by the Saints and Fathers, namely: Ambrose, Gregory, Augustine, Jerome, Chrysostom, Dionysius, Bernard, Bedé, Isidore, Hugo and Richard: and the writings of these Fathers, together with those of other Saints, I do hold and use as inspired.

Likewise as to those things which I have written and preached concerning Institutes made by men, the matter of the Decrees and Decretals, and above all concerning wicked and notorious wantons, I do hope that all men who have any intimate knowledge of the law may find that those things which I have laid down are either proved certainly and beyond doubt, or that (applying the same limits and qualifications which are given in my writings and discourses) such men may approve thereof as being somewhat safe, or probable, or likely to be true, subject always to the judgement of the Holy Roman Church, to whom with all humility I everywhere and always submit myself. And if any man—which God forbid—should say or feign that I have spoken aught against that Faith and sound doctrine which I everywhere defend, and should either expressly mention me by name as so

doing, or (if he dare not so much) should speak more vaguely to that effect, and indirectly harass me by making use of the prejudices of Clerks or lay folk;—if anyone, I say, shall thus allude to, or openly defame me, his testimony shall be found to be lying and deceitful.

I do receive the doctrine of submission to the Bishop, to whom I pay deference in this respect, but if—which God forbid—any such accusation against me be found in the writings of our lord the Prince-bishop, I do make that answer which the blessed Bernard made to certain letters of the chief Pontiff which gave assent to an evil report. “Either our Pontiff hath been ensnared by lies, or he hath been overcome of importunity.”

(2) Resolutions and Intentions set forth by Master Gerard in the name of the Lord, but not confirmed by vows.

I purpose to order my life for the glory, honour, and service of God and the salvation of my soul; to prefer no temporal good either of the body, or of honour, or of fortune, or of knowledge, to my soul’s salvation. To strive to excel in every godly endeavour of which I may be assured that I have any knowledge or discernment, having regard to my bodily powers and my state of life; of which endeavours I have mentioned some hereafter.

(3) My first resolution is to desire no further preferment, and in the future not to set my hope upon, nor to long for any temporal gain; for the more I shall have, the more covetous shall I certainly become; and in the second place according to the rule of the Primitive Church, thou canst not hold several benefices. Likewise if thou doest so, it shall repent thee in the hour of thy death; for it is commonly reported that never hath any pluralist died without knowing such remorse. The more benefices and goods I hold, the more masters have I, and the more burdens must I bear; and this is contrary to that freedom of soul which is the greatest good in the Spiritual Life. By the holding of great possessions the affections are bound, and being bound are held thereby; and the desire of such things doth infect the soul, and is repugnant to peace of heart and quietness of mind; moreover the cares which are connected therewith do often defile and perturb the mind.

Likewise as the appetite for more possessions must be cut off, so my present possessions must be reduced by little and little to a smaller compass, for if I can give alms of those things which I have, why should I strive after more? If having little I give but little to God, it is as if having much I also gave much, for God weigheth not the amount of the gift, but

rather the heart of the giver; wherefore the widow who put in two mites was preferred by Him before the rich. Also I see that the things which I now have do exceedingly bind me, and if those which I should acquire were added thereto, how much more should I be bound? Moreover my present possessions are enough, having regard to our Common Life and my position.

(4) Having achieved this purpose, I resolve that I will not pay court to any Cardinal or Ecclesiastic so as to gain benefices or temporal goods, because such subservience doth lead to many falls and relapses into sin. Thou art weak, and if thou art subservient—except it be to God—thou shalt expose thyself to many dangers. Thou art near enough to death as it is, and thou art not so strong as to bear any revellings.

In like manner thou shalt not serve any temporal master for the sake of gain; nor shalt thou be willing to practice astrology at the bidding of any; nor oughtest thou to let any man in the world persuade thee to have dealings with any forbidden science since these are in themselves evil in many ways, they cause distrust and suspicion, and they are forbidden. Also it is thy duty, so far as it is possible, to drive away these superstitions and all other curious arts from the minds of men, preserving a quiet mind, purity, and liberty of will. So doing I shall please God, by following His good pleasure in these very matters in which I formerly displeased Him. Thou shalt never observe the seasons that are held to be propitious for journeying, or for blood letting or for any other thing save in the material sense of considering the density of the atmosphere, for such curious choice is forbidden in the decrees and by the Holy Fathers.

Likewise whatever I shall begin, I will begin it; in the name of the Lord, and in the matter I will put my hope in the Lord that He will direct me therein to the way of my salvation; put not any trust in the divining of fate, or in reading the stars, but hope only in God, and in prayer; in good angels and their protection. How do I know whether in my journey, or mine undertaking success shall be profitable to me? Truly such success is very often unprofitable, and difficulties and tribulation are oftentimes most profitable; therefore I will submit me to the ordinance of God. “Blessed is the man whose hope is in God”; “Cast therefore all thy care upon Him, for He careth for thee!” How great is the mercy which hath recalled me (as I hope) to Him, by means of chastisements which I bore unwillingly! Since

we should not be anxious as to what we shall eat, how much less should we be so about the forecasts of the stars and other superstitions? It is needful for every Christian to abandon himself in purity of heart and to commit himself to God.

(5) Also I will never try to anticipate the future, and for the most part will think but little upon it, for I will devote to God both myself and everything that doth concern me. Man is defiled by honours, by favours, and by greed, after which all men do seek; and by such knowledge, whose object is gain, his mind is darkened, his passions are aroused, the straightness of his nature is made crooked and his desires are tainted, so that he cannot rightly discern what things are of God, and virtuous, and good for the body. Wherefore it is very seldom that a man who doth follow after knowledge which bringeth him wealth (as the study of medicine, or of laws or statutes), is right-minded or just in his reasoning, or righteous, or doth live the more contentedly or uprightly.

Do not spend thy time in the study of geometry, arithmetic, rhetoric, dialectic, grammar, songs, poetry, legal matters or astrology; for all these things are reprov'd by Seneca, and a good man should withdraw his mind's eye therefrom and despise them: How much more, therefore, should they be eschewed by a spiritually-minded man and a Christian? Moreover such studies are an unprofitable expense of time, and are of no help for good living.

Of all the sciences of the heathen, their Moral Philosophy is least to be avoided—for this is often of great use and profit both for one's own study and for teaching others. Wherefore the wiser amongst them, such as Socrates and Plato, turned all Philosophy into the consideration of moral questions, and if they spoke of deep matters they dealt therewith as in a figure and lightly, dwelling upon their moral aspect (as thou knowest from the blessed Augustine and thine own study) so that some rule for conduct might always be found side by side with knowledge.

Seneca, too, following this principle, as often mingles moral dissertations with his discussion of natural philosophy; for whatsoever doth not make us better, or induce us to avoid evil, is harmful.

The secrets of nature should not be sought out in the writings of the heathen, or in the books of our Law, the Old and New Testaments, but when they meet us therein God is to be praised and glorified for them and in

them; so that the knowledge of natural laws may be of profit and be offered as a sacrifice to God Most High by giving thank-offerings to Him like righteous Abel, and that like him we may draw holy thoughts therefrom to the honour of God. But in everything remember that all these things defile the mind and do not satisfy it; and through the grace of the Most High, thou shalt find, as I hope, that thou canst not stomach them.

(6) I resolve never to take a degree in medicine, because I do not purpose to get any gain or preferment by such a degree; and the same resolve doth hold for Civil and canon law; for the purpose of a degree is either gain or preferment, or vain glorification and worldly honour, which latter things if they lead not to the former, are simply useless, empty, and most foolish, being contrary to godliness and all freedom and purity. When a man doth crave for them he falleth into many evils, and they are worse than the motives of gain and preferment. I resolve not to study any art, nor to write any book, nor to undertake any journey nor any labour, nor to pursue any science, with the purpose of extending mine own fame and repute for knowledge, or of gaining honour, or the gratitude of any man or for the sake of leaving a memorial of myself behind me. For if I should do these things, or any act whatsoever with such motives and take my reward therein, I should not be rewarded of my Father Which is in Heaven. If I shall do any of these I will do it always for some good purpose, looking for a reward which is eternal: wherefore let the extending of my repute be in every way avoided. This desire for empty glory, for remembrance, and for fame is so admirably reprov'd, even by the Philosophers, that any man who is worthy of praise would scarce harbour such a motive. But if praise should follow any deed done really for the sake of God (but the motive of which was unseen, though the deed itself was in the light), give then that praise and glory to the Most High.

(7) Likewise after the example of Bernard, utter no word by the which thou mayest seem to be very religious, or endowed with knowledge. Resolve to avoid and abhor all public disputations which are but wranglings for success in argument, or the appearance thereof (such as the disputations of graduates in Theology and Arts at Paris), and take no part therein. These are unprofitable, always concerned with mere subtleties, and for the most part superstitious, sensual, devilish or earthly, so that the teaching thereof is often hurtful, ever unprofitable, and a useless waste of time;—meanwhile

thou canst gain spiritual profit by prayer, or meditation, or the study of some holy book.

So also I will never argue with anyone in private unless it is certain and evident that some good end shall follow, or unless my fellow disputant doth desire to hear me, or is one with whom I can confer without wrangling, and temperately which conditions are to be observed except when malice doth demand severity for some eventual good: but even so I will never act without due deliberation. It is evident that to attain a good end, everything must ever be ordered for the Glory of God; that is, that one must pray continually: wherefore talk not with anyone unless he doth admit the truth.

(8) Thou shalt never study to take a degree in Theology, nor strive therefor, because: (1.) I care not to follow after gain or preferment or reputation, and knowledge I may have equally well without a degree. (2.) The common life of an university is carnal and is for them that savour carnal things. (3) In many respects thou mayest be hindered from promoting the spiritual health of thy neighbour, from prayer, from purity of mind and from contemplation. (4) One must be present at many vain lectures and be in the company of a multitude of men, by which things a man is defiled and turned from his path.

Thou shalt never busy thyself with law or medicine save when occasion ariseth and when thou canst do some good thereby, for: (1) These studies have no nourishment in them, but do turn aside the mind; yet for the sake of peacemaking, or in case of necessity, or when some urgent cause ariseth one may meddle with law; and with medicine also for the sake of one's own bodily health or that of a fellow man. (2) These be worldly matters in which it is convenient rather to take the counsel of others, than to give advice. (3) The study of medicine is forbidden to Divines, Monks, and them that do long after the Law of God.

Thou shalt not give medicine of doubtful virtue, nor prescribe any medicine whatever for a disease the nature whereof is uncertain, nor give a potion to any sick man save under most urgent necessity when no other adviser may be had; otherwise thou shalt never intrude thyself: thou seest how greatly good men do rejoyce in being freed from practising this art.

Thou shalt not advise upon, nor busy thyself with causes concerning matters of opinion or controversy unless: (1) It be clearly apparent to thee that otherwise some falsehood might be propagated; or (2) for Charity's

sake; or (3) the whole cause be that of righteousness; or (4) it be most certainly for the curbing of evil manners; or (5) to prevent the oppression of the poor; or (6) unless thou canst intervene and yet preserve an equal mind. After such interference withdraw thyself so that there remain to thee no care for the residue of the matter. Likewise take good heed that thou be careful not to be moved by friendship, or kinship, or hatred, and if thy friend or kinsman, or one that was aforetime thine enemy be concerned, search thy heart to know if thou wouldest act in the same manner if he were a stranger or not thine enemy. It is evident, as Virgil saith, that the happiness of the dweller in the country is that “he hath not looked upon the iron rigour of the law and the mad turmoil of the Forum.”

Thou shalt not appear before a spiritual officer or judge, as a favour to any friend or kinsman or other man, nor at all unless the most urgent call of duty require it. If such case of necessity urge thee, thou oughtest to send a deputy, and not to go thyself, because by this is quietness of mind disturbed if thou dost intrude thyself into the affairs, the tumult and tempest of the world. In all other conditions let the dead bury their dead. Thou shalt not appear before the civil magistrates or the secular judge in Deventer save in the case of similar necessity, for thy friends deal well enough with all such matters before magistrates.

Never busy thyself with any controversies of men whatsoever (save as above) unless it be to compose them, and when this can be done in a short time and without brawling. Even when such composition ought to be made, if it can be done as well by another, do not intrude thyself; always consider this. Yet put not aside the making of peace when thou canst truly make it, out of deference to thine own quietness.

(10) Whensoever any kinsman of thine is beaten, or slain, or evilly entreated, thou shalt never evilly entreat him that did the injury; nor ever give counsel against him to his hurt; nor ever close thy mouth against him, nor avoid him. Rather admonish him with words of comfort, or lead him back to peace. Also if his friends would take vengeance thou shalt dissuade them therefrom with words of peace, and from injury that they do it not.

Do thou forgive all men, and be an ensample in so doing, and so much the more as thou dost admonish others. I will never have part in the doings of my friends or kinsmen or betters, save only such as are acts of piety, tending to mercy and duty and justice, and also such as may not be done so

well through another man. Yet would it be evil to turn aside, for the sake of preserving mine own quietness, from works of piety and justice which could not be done through another, and from my duty in serving my neighbour.

Of the study of Holy Books

(11) I now return to consider the pursuit of knowledge. Let the root of thy study and the mirror of thy life be these: First, the Gospel of Christ, for therein is the Life of Christ. (2) The lives and discourses of the Fathers. (3) The Epistles of Paul and the other Canonical Epistles, and the Acts of the Apostles. (4) Holy Books, as the meditations of Bernard and the Horologium of Anselm, Bernard on the Conscience, the Soliloquies of Augustine, and suchlike books. (5) The legends and devotions of the Saints, the Instructions of the Fathers on Conduct, such as the Pastoral of Gregory, the blessed Augustine on Monastic work, Gregory on Job, and so forth. (6) The Homilies of the Holy Fathers and of the Four Doctors upon the Gospels, the Interpretations of the Holy Fathers and Commentaries upon the Epistles of Paul, for these are included in the authorized readings of the Church. (7) The study of the Proverbs of Solomon, Ecclesiastes and Ecclesiasticus, for these are included in the lectionaries and authorized readings of the Church. “I will pray with the spirit and I will pray with the understanding also.” (8) The study and interpretation of the Psalter, for this is included in the services of the Church of the Holy Fathers. “I will sing with the spirit and I will sing with the understanding also.” (9) The study of the Books of Moses; the historical books—Joshua, Judges and Kings; of the Prophets and the expositions of the Fathers upon the same.

(12) As to the manner of perusing the Decrees, so as to know what was determined of our forefathers and of the Church: one must not strive to master them, but only peruse them; (1) lest through ignorance of the law thou pervert piety into disobedience. (2) That thou mayest see the material fruit of the Primitive Church. (3) That thou mayest know from what thou thyself shouldest refrain, and from what thou shouldest admonish others to refrain.

(13) Thou oughtest to hear Mass to the end, every day that thou canst, for thus it is ordained even for lay folk on Sundays in the directions for the Mass (de consec. I. C.) and for Clerks that they hear It daily, as is said in the note in the same place. Also remain in the Church on feast days until the

solemnization of the Mass is completed. Singing is a help to devotion for the natural body as thou knowest by experience. One should always rise for the reading of the Gospel, and stand up, wherefore it is said in the directions (de consec. I. C.): “By our Apostolic authority we command that men sit not, but stand, reverently bending at the reading of the Gospel.” In the word reverently is implied the honour due to the Gospel, as also in the place wherein it is said: “Let them hear the words thereof with attention and adore with faith,” that is, “Let them show reverence by the posture of the body”; this doth consist—first in the bending, secondly in the lowering of the hood as is customary, thirdly in bowing at the Names of Jesus and Mary; for those devoted to God have this custom.

Likewise, when the Gospel is read, the mind should not occupy itself with any other devotion, or reading which doth demand attention; for the senses, when occupied upon several matters, are less intent upon any single one. The words of the Gospel and of the Apostolic writings are ordained to be heard at the Celebrations, as is said in the directions (de consec. I. D.): “It is vain to hear if we attend not.”

Moreover, one should read nothing nor meditate upon aught else, for the duty of the moment is to attend duly to the Gospel, and we do take away therefrom any attention which we may expend upon other prayers and meditations. Our bowing ourselves at these words and the bodily posture of reverence are symbols of the reverence of our minds, and these be false symbols if so be that the things signified answer not thereto. Moreover, the outward observance is a means to induce inward reverence, but it is vain if the one answer not to the other.

(14) Furthermore, to be reverent with the lips and the understanding also is a greater thing than to show reverence with the lips only, or by the lowering of the hood; wherefore I will lower my hood to hear, I will hear with the ear, and I will hear with the understanding also. Otherwise the words are as a tinkling cymbal or as sounding brass. No words or sayings are mine own if the meaning thereof doth not reach my mind—also thou shalt stand with bended knee, with head uncovered and with bowed back after the Consecration of the Sacred Host, if thou art able to see It, or the Chalice. This humble adoration and abasement of body is seemly before God, and doth in every way betoken an attitude of mind which is fitting as a help to devotion; yea, and most fitting is the bending of the head over the

arm as thou dost know: for the servant is by all means bound to show reverence in the presence of his Lord. A bended posture doth admirably befit devotion of mind, for the motions of the spirit do bear relation to the posture of the body. When thou art afar off or canst not see, prostrate thyself and bow thine head and pray to thy God in secret from the Sanctus to the Pax, and afterward, whether thou dost partake or not, until the Gospel of St. John.

(15) Receive the Pax with reverence and devotion, for it is a contact with the Body of the Lord through the mouth of the priest. Is not reverence paid to The Veronica, and to the picture of Christ, though it is not sanctified by His bodily presence? In the Primitive Church all the faithful were wont to communicate, and in place of such Communion the Pax is given as being in some measure a receiving of Christ's Body. The reason (as I hold) that His Body is not now given so generally is that in the Primitive Church when His Blood was but lately shed, men were better, and religious fervour was in full vigour and at its height: but this is now grown old, wherefore He hath withdrawn Himself.

When the Pax doth come be thou prepared as if thou didst verily receive the Body of Christ, and at that time lift up the love of thine heart and prepare thyself so that though thou are not able carnally to receive the Elements of the Holy Sacrament, thou mayest at least do so in the Spirit. After receiving such communion through the Pax, the love of thine heart must abide and endure inwardly; but if thou dost begin to wander in mind, as doth often happen to thee when thou dost meditate without ordering thy thoughts beforehand, turn thy mind to Christ's Passion.

(16) Likewise from the Sanctus onward prepare to look upon the Host—are not all men wont to make preparation before looking upon their King, by whom also they must be seen? After this make thyself ready for the Reception and do nought besides, for at that time the Presence of Christ doth work upon thee and doth help thy weakness; thus shalt thou be moved to love the Sacrament. This is evident from the words wherein it is said, "Lift up your hearts" and "We have lifted them up to the Lord."

Also always draw so near the Priest as thy condition doth permit, to hear the Mass and to look upon the Host, and stand in the Presence Thereof. Be not willing to consult for any man that he may be ordained, nor to speak for him, nor assist him to this end unless he be most devout. The first of these

resolutions is on account of the responses pertaining to the office which ought to be made, and are not made, as is shown in the fourth of the Sentences and in the Decrees; the second is, on account of the risk of Simony which doth often occur; and also, by reason of the unprofitable state of the Church.

With regard to abstinence these things seem good, but are not the subject of promise. First to keep the fasts that are ordained; secondly, never to eat flesh meats. The reasons hereof are to be found in the Chapter of the Decrees which is called Margarita (de consec., § v). Thirdly, save for just cause, not to omit to fast during Advent and Septuagesima. Fourthly, let there be a daily fast which doth consist in not wholly satisfying the appetite unless cold weather doth hinder this resolve. All philosophers do advise this, specially Seneca and Aristotle. Withhold thy hand while appetite doth yet remain: the moment of its satisfaction is hard to know, yet do thou thus reflect upon it by considering now much thou wouldst wish to eat if it were right for thee to consult thy desire, and while this doth still endure, deny some part thereof as shall seem reasonable to thee.

Fifthly, toward the close of a meal, or before partaking of the last dish, consider how much thou hast consumed, and how much more thou wouldest eat if thou didst continue, and in future omit somewhat of the earlier or latter part of the meal. Sixthly, at the beginning when thou dost set forth to prepare thy food think upon the victual and how much thou dost require. Seventhly, take but one cooked pear after thy meal, and that not of inordinate size, or three of the very smallest. Eighthly, always eat in the evening between the fourth and fifth hours, unless the presence of guests, or infirmity, or some accident, such as a journey, compel thee. This is approved for the following reasons: (1) This hour is convenient for digestion and for the hindering of that corruption of food in the stomach which would take place in waking hours through lack of warmth; (2) during waking hours study and other matters such as care or sadness do impede digestion; (3) take food at this time lest drink following food may hinder digestion; (4) it doth prevent drink so taken from causing disturbance as otherwise doth often happen; (5) lest raw fruit, vegetables, and the like might do hurt as they would if taken in the daytime; (6) thy sleep will be the better, for a full belly doth slumber readily; (7) at that time study and prayer which are the portion of the daytime do less hinder sleep; (8) by this custom thou wilt get

thee to bed quickly, and always at the same hour; (9) by so doing one may get continuous sleep through going to rest in good time; (10) the love of study will not tempt thee too much at night; (11) by this means thou hast the day unbroken for work and prayer. (12) Thus, all thy waking hours are spent in abstinence and fasting, are unhindered and fit for the service of God and for work. Also a man hath more desire for food when he is eating than when he is altogether abstaining, so that one cannot so readily practise abstinence when near to or at the table. From the Exaltation of the Holy Cross till Easter take but one daily meal; this is the custom of the Carthusians and Bernardines and others: this Season doth begin in September about the Equinox, and doth continue until near about the Vernal Equinox.

(17) In seasons of great cold it is lawful to take more food, but yet not exceeding one meal daily;—such is the teaching of Hippocrates; this doth help thee to resist the cold, which thou couldst scarce do otherwise; for the same reason thou mayest sleep longer by one hour or an hour and a half. When it is needful to eat twice in the day take a small amount, and food of light quality, such as one egg and no more, or rather some drying food as bread and wine, or vegetables, with a little bread, but if thou take wine let it be for thy stomach's sake. The reasons of his are as above, where I have argued of the need to eat at night.

I would wish to be able never to drink wine unnecessarily so long as I am in good health, lest I violate the precepts of Paul; for to do so is luxury and is over costly. One should never drink immediately before or after a meal, nor during the course thereof unless infirmity or some most urgent cause compel. During and after manual work one should by no means drink anything unless the body is cool: this is healthy for body and soul. Let nothing lead thee to drink between times, or so as to break a fast: it is good to bind thy feet in the fetters of wisdom. Set a time wherein to read what thou dost write in this book for it doth order thy life. It doth seem to me that the fathers in the desert offered short and frequent prayers, so that the heart might be raised continually to the Lord, and might not be set on worldly affairs, but be abstracted therefrom, and thus should one do.

(18) I do purpose in the Name of the Lord always to fast upon the fourth day of the week unless infirmity, or reasonable cause hinder me. Yet this I ordain not as an unalterable rule, but as somewhat whereat to strive; and so

also on the Sabbath, and on the sixth day—for upon the fourth Judas betrayed the Lord, and on the sixth was He crucified. He who fasteth not on these days doth needlessly betray Him and taketh part with His murderers. I am the more bound to observe these days in that by the apportionment of God it is my lot to be a Clerk, moreover by such fast my health is preserved and I do feel that thereby my soul is better with her God. But even if such abstinence should seem to hurt the body in some small measure, think not of that, for thou hast always been in better health when thou didst fast. Ever pay some tribute to thy God, and thou wilt ever remember Him the better.

(19) Avoid haste, eagerness, and gluttony in eating, for such greed proceedeth from inordinate love of its object. A greedy mouth and lust for meat have an intermixture of sin. Gregory in his Exposition of Job saith: “This doth stir up loquacity, leadeth to excess, doth heat the mind and turn it from the path just as drunkenness or too much talk do kindle it and lead it into snares.”

This doth also cut off and shut out all thought of God.

It is better to do one action well with great deliberation, than through lack thereof to be thrown out of one’s course. Also, as concerneth bodily health, in proportion as food is taken well and with deliberation, so much the more readily and wholesomely is it digested. The same habit of deliberation should prevail in writing and speaking and in action also, because it is impossible to seek therein the Glory of God, if a man so impetuously rush into a matter that his whole strength is occupied in it. Learn then to be slow and restrained in action.

Do not do any good thing in such a way as to run into disobedience. In matters of temporal wealth, repayments, and expenditure upon books, regard thyself as a steward, and look to it that thou be found faithful. Therefore be frugal in supplying to thyself food and raiment, that thou mayest the better supply the needy, and worthier men than thou, and mayest promote the salvation of souls. Never give aught that is of any worth to one that is not needy, for thou wilt find very many that are in want, and if thou dost give to them that have abundance, thou art not a faithful steward, nor prudent to thine own salvation. In thy giving take no thought of carnal things. I will not receive temporal gifts from any man so long as needier persons than I may be found, for what I would not do myself, that will I not ask of another.

(20) Likewise, Gerard said, a man ought not to be disturbed about any affair of this world. He who doeth that which he knoweth, doth deserve to know much. He who doeth not that which he knoweth doth deserve to be in darkness.

It is a great matter to obey in those things which are contrary to our natural man, and are burdensome—this is true obedience.

Before all things and in all things study specially to be humble inwardly, and also outwardly before the brethren.

The knowledge of all knowledge is for a man to know that he knoweth nothing.

The more a man is assured that he is far from perfection, the nearer is he thereto.

The beginning of vainglory is to be pleasing to oneself.

By this is a man known better than by aught else, that he is praised.

Thou oughtest always to strive to note some good in another, and to think thereof.

Inordinate desire for anything not pertaining to God is as the sin of fornication: therefore the prophet saith: “It is good for me to cleave to God.”

We ought to be strenuous in prayer, and not lightly to desist from it nor think that God is unwilling to hear us.—Though oftentimes repelled, we should not despair.

He who is faint-hearted should pray as a son to a good father, as is said in the Gospel: “Which of you if he ask his father bread, will he give him a stone,” and so forth.

In everything in the whole world there is temptation, though a man perceive it not.

(21) The greatest of temptations is not to feel temptation; so long as a man knoweth that there is somewhat in him to be pruned away, so long doth he stand well.

When any evil is suggested to thee, think what thou wouldest ask thy fellows to do in like case, then doth the Devil stand confused.

Always dwell more upon the hope of Eternal Glory than upon fear of Hell.

Let every man beware of causing scandal to others by his conduct; let him study to amend the same, and everywhere to behave himself honestly,

that others may be the more edified.

With whatsoever thoughts a man doth fall asleep, with such doth he awaken; at these times it is well to pray or to read some psalms.

Slight shame borne here doth do away unending shame before God and all the Saints.

Study only to please Him Who doth know thee and all that pertaineth to thee: suppose that thou dost please all men but dost displease God; what should it profit thee? therefore turn away thy heart from the creature, yea, even with great violence.

Think how thou mayest be altogether conqueror of thyself and lift up thy heart ever to God, as saith the prophet: "Mine eyes are ever toward the Lord."

Thanks be to God.

APPENDIX TO THE LIFE OF GERARD GROOTE

A Letter to the Bishop of Utrecht on behalf of Master Gerard Groote when he was forbidden to preach publicly.

Most Potent Father, and Prince of the people of Utrecht,

IT hath happened lately that Gerard Groote, a deacon of your Diocese, inspired by the Lord, and kindled with zeal to preach the Word even in these latter days, hath denounced before clerks and lay folk their wickedness, and maintained wholesome, true, Evangelical and Apostolic doctrine as against heretics, usurers, and clerks that live in concubinage. Acting with your license and that of the Parochial Clergy he hath preached also against various crimes and corruptions of divers men in your diocese, not without some fruit, and hath sown the seed not without increase (as he doth hope). For by his preaching the hearts of many have been turned to the Lord, leaving their former perverse and evil courses.

Through his labours there are many virgins set as flowers in the field of the Lord; lives of chaste widowhood and voluntary poverty, as an harvest therein; renunciations of the world, acts of restitution and many other fruits sprung from the seed of Ecclesiastical and Catholic doctrine; and these things are seen and known of them that do truly love God.

By his means also the boldness of certain heretics who creep in secret places on the earth hath been kept down, and the wickedness of usury and disordered lust have ceased from the land of Zeeland. But yet these clerks and priests that live in concubinage have procured (as we suppose) by means of a letter obtained from you that this Gerard should be restrained indirectly from exercising the office of a preacher, and this either without cause, or without any that he knoweth.

For although your letter did apply to all priests, yet almost all save Gerard have been restored to their offices; and this, as he thinks, doth arise

not from the deliberate intention of the bishop, but through the suggestions of malicious men causing no small loss and detriment to the cause of Holy edification. At this do heretics rejoice and creep about more boldly; for this cause are those enemies of the Church glad, namely the Clerks who live in concubinage, continuing to live most uncleanly in the lusts of the flesh: usurers are well pleased, and scandals are increased, yea, even more perchance than carnal and worldly minds can comprehend. Although this Gerard calleth God to witness that so far as he himself is concerned he would wish to be at leisure to explore the truth, and to be quiet, yet he perceives that the enemy of mankind is everywhere striving against men and is driving them over the precipices and into the abyss of sin; and he hath hope that some of these may by his preaching be delivered from the snare of the hunter and from the noisome pestilence, which hope the effects of his former preaching do justify; therefore he is stirred by zeal for the House of the Lord, inflamed and urged by love for his neighbour to preach and sow the seed of the Word of God (if it may be) without temporal reward, in poverty and with humility but in all truth, as formerly he preached and sowed the same not without visible fruit. If a special license is refused him he doth ask that at least the parochial clergy may not be forbidden to employ him if they will; for according to the custom of the State and diocese of Utrecht they have been wont always to employ any trusty and good preachers whom they would, without such license. Furthermore if in spite of the good fruit his preaching hath borne, and the aforesaid custom, you should wish to inhibit Gerard from preaching (which thing God forbid should happen in your dominions), he doth ask and humbly and urgently desire of you: (1) to declare to him the pretext and reason of such inhibition; (2) not to judge him, deprive him of his right, nor suspend him from the exercise thereof without such admonitions as ought always to precede judgement; for he is ready to argue each several doctrine that he doth teach in public and private, not only before you, Father, but also before any man, and truly to prove the same from the sacred writings of the Saints and from the Scriptures: and if it be necessary to lay them before the Supreme Pontiff.

A Letter of Master William de Salvarvilla, a Cantor at Paris, to Pope Urban VI, asking that a license to preach be granted to Master Gerard.

To our most Holy Father in Christ, our Lord Urban VI., by Divine Providence Pope, Supreme Pontiff of the Inviolable Church of Rome, and of the whole world, these from your Holiness' most humble petitioner and servant William de Salvarvilla, Chanter of Paris and Archdeacon of Brabant in the Church of Liège.

MOST HOLY FATHER,

In all subjection and most humbly and devoutly kissing the feet of your Holiness, I do write that which followeth in singleness of heart, being zealous (as I believe) for the service of God.

There is a certain reverend man Gerard Groote, a Deacon of the diocese of Utrecht, learned in the sciences both liberal, natural and moral, and also in Theology and Canon Law. He hath long ago given over all his benefices for God's sake, namely prebends at Utrecht and Aix, and also his patrimony, which was no small one, having retained but a small part of the same to provide him a slender sustenance. To him is the world crucified, and he to the world; he hath become a mighty adversary to heretics, a zealous upholder of the unity of the Church, and a fervent preacher in the said diocese as against the sins of lay folk and clerks; yet he hath not received or asked for any recompense for his preaching, nor doth he seek any temporal or Ecclesiastical Benefice, but he doth desire to have a further Commission under the authority of the Apostolic See to the end that he may be able to preach more freely and without hindrance. Wherefore it would seem expedient, as I judge, that your Holiness should give him authority to preach and to make inquisition against heretics; and likewise to publish the Canonical decree of your Holiness granting such authority in the Province of Cologne or at least in the aforesaid diocese of Utrecht.

May the Most High see fit to preserve your Holiness in prosperity, to be the ruler of His Church.

Given at Leyden on the 21st day of October.

The following epitaph on Gerard is appended to A Kempis' Life of the Master as edited by Somalius. It is uncertain whether A Kempis was the author of the lines, but from the title "Epitaphium vetus et inconditum" it would seem probable that they are by a different hand. As it is impossible to reproduce the rhyme and metre of the original in a translation, the Latin text of the Epitaph is here given:

EPITAPHIUM VETUS ET INCONDITUM VENERABILIS MAGISTRI GERARDI MAGNI

Gerardus Magnus vixit sicut pius agnus,
Fecit quod dixit, sicut docuit quoque vixit.
Sicut non fictus aliis mitis sibi strictus
Lux fuerat Cleri, tradens huic lumina veri,
Lux fuerat pravis, oculus mentis bene gnavis.
Hic Mundo spretus, sed pneumate corde repletus
Ejus doctrina, falsis fuerat quasi spina
Ridiculum vanis, odium mentis male sanis
Quæ falsos læsit, pars veridicis sed adhæsit
Illi pro vero, fuit utilis hic quia clero
Ut clero laicis, prodesse volens inimicis,
Doctrina veri, debet Christus misereri
Ejus de jure, pro tali pondere curæ.
Talis namque fore, voluit gratis sed amore
Divino tactus, nulla mercede coactus
Namque resignavit præbendas sicut amavit
Christum, sic stravit carnem tenues quoque pavit,
De propriisque bonis tenuit regimen rationis.
Sic fuit exemplo lux in Christi bene templo.
Gerardus Magnus, quem verus diligit Agnus,

Sanctorum sortem tenet evincens modo mortem.

THE LIFE OF THE REVERED
FLORENTIUS, A DEVOUT PRIEST, AND
VICAR OF THE CHURCH OF DEVENTER

THE LIFE OF FLORENTIUS

PREFACE

(1) FOLLOWING the order laid down, I do now think good to write certain things concerning the life and character of Florentius, that Reverend Father of pious memory, Priest of the Church of Deventer, and once a disciple of that Master Gerard of whom I have told above. This order in my history is fitting, that having first shown the fertility of the good tree in Gerard, the founder of our Devotion, I should next exhibit the sweetness of the fair flower thereof in the godly Florentius, his disciple, for he was eminent as a follower of the same Devotion and a most fervent promoter of it.

His humble and obedient character was indeed an herb of healing for the drooping soul, and his saintly virtues are an instruction to young and old alike.

(2) I beseech thee, good brother, that thou interpret not the artlessness of my words to the injury of this illustrious priest, for he was himself a lover of humility and artlessness; but do thou read and mark the good things that I shall tell of him with the eyes of pious deference. Do as doth the provident bee drawing sweet honey from fair flowers in some green meadow, and (for the edification of thy condition and order) sow the seeds of those virtues which adorned our beloved Father Florentius, and plant his example in the garden of thy soul, to bear as it were flowers of roses, and sweet-scented lilies therein. So shalt thou go forward continually in virtue, and thine heart shall glow yet more fervently in the furnace of the love of Christ. He was a mirror of virtue notable indeed, and to all that desire to serve God, one that doth help them to reach the Kingdom of Heaven. Since I had intimate knowledge of him, and did oft stand by and minister to him, I am so much the more competent to speak truly concerning his life.

Novice

(3) I pray thee complete to the honour of God that work which thou didst undertake at my desire and that of others; for it will be a joy to them that come after to hear how bright were the stars which did shine forth in our land. And thou, too, mayest be a partaker in their merits, if in brotherly love thou art willing to impart to others that knowledge which thou hast freely received.

The Elder Brother.

(4) The task which I approach is toilsome and one that is too heavy for my knowledge and my feeble powers. I would choose rather to be silent and read the words of others, than to cast a shadow upon the bright fame of that illustrious man by telling thereof in my homely and barbarous speech. But since thou dost not inquire into niceties of style but rather moral worth in the subject, therefore in despite of mine unskill in words thou must not despise my pearls though the shells wherein they are found be worthless.

I confess that I am not so skilful as to be able to set forth the life of so great a father; yet I do offer in the temple of God goat skins to cover the roof of the tabernacle, for I have no precious stones wherewith to adorn the vestment of the priest. Also it would seem to me a hard-hearted and ungrateful thing if I should keep silence as to the virtues of a father so beloved though I am unworthy to tell of them, for in his life he was a benefactor to me and to many others: he first launched me for the service of God, and in the fulness of time steered me to the haven of the monastery. Wherefore in gratitude and for a sweet remembrance of him I in turn do gladly repay his bounty, now he is gone, by the finishing of this poor work. Let it be as some excuse for the task that I have taken on me, that I deeply love this reverend Father, and hope that his memory may always and everywhere flourish among devout men: And may the Lord Jesus who despised not the poor widow's two mites, reward me, his poor servant, in the time to come, for that with a good intention I do put this labour of my hands into His treasury, leaving higher themes to men more learned. Knowing mine own littleness I submit to the correction of my betters, and I ask that every devout mind may help me with prayer, and that if any shall draw any edification from reading these writings, he may praise God for all His gifts and be grateful even for the least.

CHAPTER I

Of the humility of Christ which Florentius studied to imitate

(1) OUR Lord and Master Jesus Christ, the Flower of all virtue and of all knowledge, began in humility and meekness that rule of life which He handed down to His disciples to be observed as their law and pattern, saying: “Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart and ye shall find rest for your souls.”

(2) That devout and humble priest of Christ, Master Florentius, the son of Radewin, followed after this virtue of true humility, which is the straightest path to the attainment of the Kingdom of Heaven. This path he kept to the very end of his life through many a spiritual contest, living most strictly in the continual mortification of the flesh, until he entered into the rest of everlasting bliss, to be rewarded by God for his dutiful and pious labours. But how he reached this path of humility I will tell, God helping me, in the following stages of my story. The Almighty and Merciful God, Who from all eternity had chosen him to be consecrated as His priest, and foreordained that he should be illuminated with the more excellent gifts; God, I say, of His marvellous goodness snatched him forth from the shipwreck of the world, and withdrew him therefrom; by the word of Truth He did effectually regenerate him, to lead an holier life and to be a branch yielding new fruit.

CHAPTER II

Of the interpretation of the name Florentius and its three glorious meanings

(1) VERILY the name “Florentius, son of Radewin,” was a prophecy of his future righteousness, which should declare the glory of our Father in Heaven and make yet more bright the fame of his own kin. For herein is a laudable thing, if the life of a man be in accord with his name, and if his repute be consonant with his virtues: which thing is approved in every way by his upright deeds.

Florentius is a name sweet for the righteous to utter and recall, for in his life he showed himself such that he was held in the greatest love and reverence by all men, both the Religious and those of the world.

(2) Well is he named Florentius, as one that gathereth flowers (Flores legens) by reason of the liberal arts which once he learned and in which he was so skilled and proficient that he had the title of a Master thereof, as indeed he was—or again by reason of his knowledge of the divine law, and the books of sacred Theology, which he studied (legit) yet more gladly in preference to any other Science, and loved more dearly than all the treasures of the world, as saith the prophet in the Psalm, “Therefore have I loved Thy Commandments above gold and topaz.”

But a far more lovely meaning is “One that holdeth flowers” (Flores tenens) because he followed Christ the Flower of all virtues and the Lover of Chastity, for Whose love Florentius despised the flowers of the world and held most firmly the integrity of the faith and the one law of Catholic peace, saying with the Bride in the Song of Songs, “My Beloved to me and I to him, who feedeth among the lilies. I held him and I will not let him go.”

(3) Moreover by a more sanctified interpretation and one more fruitful, he is called Florentius as one that gathereth flowers together (Flores collagens) because he gathered together with him in his house many clerks and brethren who were in the flower of their age; and these, despising the vanity of the world, served the Most High God with humility and devotion, in chastity of life and brotherly love, as the Holy David singeth with joyful voice: “Behold! how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.” These brethren Florentius ruled with such a discipline and taught with such fervency of spirit that his house was a school of heavenly training, having therein a mirror of holiness, a garniture of moral virtues, a pattern of goodness, a door to admit the poor, a place of meeting for clerks, of instruction for lay folk, of refuge for the devout, and for the beginning and carrying forward of every good thing. In this house many honourable and learned men first conceived the spirit of devotion, and like bees laden with honey went far afield from the full hive to spread fertility in divers places; and God giving them His blessing, the fruit of their labours was not small, so that one may justly say of them that thereby “the flowers have appeared in our land.”

CHAPTER III

Of the interpretation of his father's name Radewin

(1) LET it not seem foolishness if the signification of his father's name be mystically interpreted, for this is thought to tend in no small degree to the honour of so great a man.

Fitting enough, then, is the name of Radewin as meaning "The Divine Radiance," and by this name Christ is rightly signified, for He is the Brightness of the Father Who doth illumine the world with the light of His wisdom, with His spotless life, His true doctrine, His holy miracles, and His abundant revelation. He sent forth also His apostles like beams of the true Sun to preach His word in all the world and give a good example to all the faithful, saying to them: "So let your light shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father Who is in Heaven."

(2) Therefore is Florentius well named the son of Radewin, for through Christ was he born again to a lively hope, by Him was he worthy to be irradiated and set on fire that he might despise earthly things and fervently love the things of Heaven. And if this name Radewin be translated from the Teutonic into the Latin tongue, "Rade" is "consilium" (that is "counsel"), and "win" is "vinum" (or "wine"), and these two words are excellently fitted to Florentius, who put aside the counsel of worldly wisdom and submitted himself to the commandments of the Law of God according to that saying of the Psalmist: "Thy testimonies are my meditation, and thy Justifications my counsel."

In place of those vain and carnal delights which the world doth afford to them who love it, Christ gave to Florentius a taste of that inner sweetness which the world is not worthy to receive, and filled his heart and soul with

the Wine of spiritual joy in the celebration of the Divine Mysteries, so that he glowed inwardly with the flame of the love of God and rejoiced with the voice of exultation saying with that most devout prophet: “My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God.” Then, too, concentrating all the powers within him, and being caught up in the Spirit above the body, he offered himself as a lively sacrifice, and one well pleasing unto God, and prayed faithfully with supplication for Holy Church and all Christian people.

In this Sacred Feast he partook of that sweet draught which is poured forth from God Himself, and his soul being melted with love at the thought of God’s infinite Bounty, with great giving of thanks he pondered upon these mystical words: “How great is the multitude of Thy sweetness, O Lord, which Thou hast hidden for them that fear Thee!”

Having told these things by way of preface, my pen turneth to his deeds.

CHAPTER IV

Of his native land, and how he went to study at Prague

(1) THIS revered father and devout priest of Christ, Master Florentius, was Vicar of Deventer, having been converted by the preaching of the venerable Gerard Groote, the grace of God working therewith. Having been his humble hearer, Florentius studied to imitate Gerard in all things, and receiving his wholesome counsels with gratitude, loved him as his dearest father, the begetter of his salvation, always and everywhere paying him the greatest reverence as was fitting. Therefore he deserved to be loved in turn by Gerard even more than were the other disciples, and to be commended above the rest for the special beauty and modesty of his character, for with these qualities he was eminently endowed and shone therewith in the Religious life.

(2) He was born in the city of Leerdam, in the territory of the noble Count de Erkell; this city is situated near the boundary of Holland and about three miles from Utrecht. His father, Radewin, was well known by repute amongst those of his time; and being sufficiently endowed with goods and substance, considering the needs of his condition in life, he gave his fatherly consent and assistance to his son Florentius when the latter was setting forth to study at Prague. At this time the privileged University of Prague in Bohemia was in a most flourishing state, and many men went more eagerly thither from the Low Countries. He soon became a good scholar, for he was brilliant in understanding and eager to go forward in knowledge, and in like manner he was noted amongst the students for kindness to his intimates and reverence toward his teacher. Afterward he

returned to his own country and his kindred, and having gained his Master's Degree was received with honour.

(3) All his friends and neighbours rejoiced together exceedingly; for the pleasure of his presence, his health, and prosperity was rightfully a joy and consolation to them after his absence in lands so distant, and the perils through which God had suffered him to pass. But if his return in due time from the University of Prague, and his studies, gave great delight to his friends, yet since God ordained that something even better should follow, this return was the happy preparation for his eternal well-being, for after the lapse of no great while he became a true disciple of Christ instead of a Master of Arts. During his homeward journey from Prague our good Lord showed him a marvellous thing and one wherein His Mercy was clearly manifest; for when he had reached a deep valley a chariot followed behind him dashing down from the mountain with great speed; and as he could not turn aside from it, and was in fear of bodily peril, he threw himself upon the help of God, for there was no help from man. When he had called upon the Almighty, the immeasurable tenderness of our Saviour was present with him; for wonderful to relate, as soon as he had called upon the Lord, he saw that chariot in front of him upon the road on which he was travelling, and all danger was at an end. This whole matter he ascribed to a miracle wrought on his behalf by God Who healeth them that are troubled in heart, and doth free them that call upon Him from every strait.

CHAPTER V

Of his honourable character in the world

(1) HE was eminent for his honourable character, his cheerfulness amongst his comrades, his kindliness in word and generosity in spending. He was comely to look upon, of graceful figure and of moderate height. For a certain time God allowed him to mingle in the world, and learn by experience the deceitful madness thereof, but not to abide the hazard all the days of his life; so that no one whose desire was to be converted might despair of pardon, seeing that a change to better things had been wrought in this Florentius in so short a time.

(2) It happened upon a time that he was invited with many others to a marriage, and when they were upon the way together, being most eager to please his friends and to make merry with them, he did as follows for their gratification: cutting down green branches from the trees he took them and embowered those who sat in the carriage in suchwise as greatly to win their favour. For he knew not yet what the Lord should do concerning him, nor thought with what care he, in company with the devout Virgins, must inwardly adorn his conscience so as to be worthy to be called to an heavenly marriage; nor did he know of that celestial feast at the Marriage of Christ, wherefore he rejoiced to take part in earthly festivities. But through the Mercy of God he abode not long in this vanity, for receiving the blessed call, he attained to that mighty grace of devotion which surpasseth all worldly delight.

(3) But this worldly act of his did foreshadow that good thing which should come to him, namely, that when by the grace of God he was converted into a spiritually minded man he should call many of his fellow guests to that marriage Feast among the citizens of Heaven, which the Immortal Bridegroom Jesus Christ doth celebrate with all the Saints for

ever and ever. In after days this was most clearly made manifest by the many brethren whom he turned to the devout life, as I have seen evidently with mine own eyes, and as all Deventer doth know.

CHAPTER VI

Of his conversion through the preaching of Master Gerard

(1) THE tender care of our Saviour was not lacking to succour this wandering lamb who was straying in great peril amid the mists of worldly fame. Therefore when the time for showing mercy to him was come, the Good Shepherd of Souls carefully withdrew the Sheep which He had dearly bought at the price of His own Blood from the snares that encompassed him, and pitifully led him into the Fold of that Holy Flock over which he should rule.

When the venerable Master Gerard Groote was preaching the Gospel of Christ throughout the Diocese of Utrecht, many Clerks and lay folk, having heard the Word of God, deserted the vanities of the world, being anxious to avoid the punishment of Eternal fire, and by penitence and sorrow to gain the Kingdom of Heaven; for the voice of the Master as he preached was a living power which did so much the more prevail over the hearts of his hearers in that he himself was before all other men upon the path of virtue. So that his holy life showing itself in deeds gave confirmation to his words.

(2) At that time, therefore, when Gerard was preaching to large congregations in the Church of S. Mary at Deventer, Master Florentius came also, eagerly listening for what he should say; and being outwardly instructed in wisdom through the light of this heavenly discourse, he was pricked to the heart, and soon became enlightened inwardly. For the great preacher was wont to turn his eyes from time to time upon those that stood by, and to frame his discourse with regard to the depth and extent thereof to suit the quality and need of his hearers, gauging these by the zeal which

they displayed; just so do eager fishers spread their net most widely where they deem that most fishes have congregated.

So it happened by the inspiration of God that Master Florentius, who was then endowed with all the grace of youth and sufficiently provided with all things necessary, gladly heard the Word of the Lord. He stopped not his ears nor turned aside from the music of that Heavenly Flute, but to his own profit he took to himself those words which proceeded forth from the mouth of the great preacher for the good of all and sundry. Therefore was he numbered amongst those Sheep of whom our Saviour said: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them and they follow me."

CHAPTER VII

How he despised the life of the world and joined himself to Master Gerard

(1) MASTER FLORENTIUS, therefore, being breathed upon by the Spirit of God and inwardly besprinkled with heavenly dew, suddenly withdrew his idle feet which he had at first planted upon the way of this present world.

He prudently considered that to the short-lived gratification of the flesh there should surely succeed death the ruthless, and grief eternal. He resolved, therefore, to despise the deceitful honours of the world, and to his own exceeding gain thought good to follow the lowly life of Christ, that he might not lose his part in that home-land of the angels which is fair with flowers. Wishing then to converse more intimately with Master Gerard, whom he saw to be zealous toward all men for their soul's health, he delayed not to approach confidently his reverend presence, and to set in order before him his inmost thoughts; for he looked upon Gerard as the friend and steward of God.

(2) When he came Gerard received him gladly, and opening a loving heart to Florentius held converse with him as he desired, being ready to reason with him of any matter concerning which he would inquire.

Coming together they held sweet converse upon the things that pertain to salvation; the heart of each burned with an heavenly flame; the things of earth were of none account, but their good purpose to hold to the service of God was confirmed. For setting an holy life before them, and being zealous to keep citizenship in the country of the Lord, they were made thenceforward of one mind in the love of the Brotherhood. And the manifold grace of Christ was present with them so that they were profitable to salvation not only for themselves but also for their neighbours: for

certain learned men and eloquent preachers were added to them, for their comfort and fuller joy and for the adornment of the House of our God. These burning fiercely with that flame which is the gift of the Holy Spirit, chose to walk closely in the footprints of Christ: to despise the world, to wage bold warfare against sin, and so to pass to eternal good.

CHAPTER VIII

How Florentius himself, now fully converted, did convert many others

(1) AND as that most soft South wind of the Love Divine breathed yet more constantly upon the garden of his heart, and watered it with tears, he began to be very fruitful in devotion, and to be moved with pious zeal to draw others from the defilements of sin. He therefore made it his care that in place of those whose worldly companionship he had formerly loved when occupied with profane study, he should now have Spiritual Brothers; for he desired that others also should be enkindled by that flame by which he himself was set on fire, and illumined by that light by which he was enlightened of God: and he was not backward in directing those who came to him both by words and the light of his example. Therefore he persuaded Clerks and lay folk who desire to serve God to flee from commerce with evil, to hasten to hear the Word of God, to follow after the lowliness of Christ, and to set the life of the Saints as the pattern before their eyes, seeing that through the grace of chastity and the observance of the precepts of the Lord they might gain an everlasting recompense.

(2) Nor was that labour profitless which he expended to gain souls, but an abundant increase grew therefrom, for many young men and maidens, relying on his wholesome counsels, leaving parents and friends, began to walk in the paths of humility and devotion, and hating the life of the world to associate themselves together in Christ after the Apostolic manner; and they rejoiced with eager hearts to keep a Common table, and to have meagre sustenance. Lastly he exhorted them severally to go forward in the steps of virtue, to pray more often; to labour with their hands in due season; to be instant in reading holy books, and in earnest meditation; for by these

one shall gain increase of fervour in devotion, and shall have that ever present dread of the occasions of sin that doth guard a man, that he be not seduced of the devil through the idleness of his heart.

CHAPTER IX

Of the burdens that he bore, and the wrongs that he suffered

(1) THAT old enemy of mankind, the Devil, perceiving these exercises in the spiritual warfare, was sorely hurt, and omitted not to persecute the devout Master, being jealous of this good beginning and of his pious deeds—for Satan feared that through the example and industrious preaching of Florentius the spoils of many souls would be taken from him; therefore he stirred up certain adversaries to impugn the simple life of this just man with harsh words and derision, as is the wont of such men to use, hoping to withdraw him from the good course which he had begun. But Florentius, being a man of gentle mind and well disposed to bear reproach for Christ's sake, was moved neither by evil report nor by the lies of them that would belittle him, for these things weighed lightly upon him as spider's webs, so that he continued constant in his good undertaking. He walked meekly among the perverse, and patiently amid slanderers, returning to no man evil for evil, but with a quiet heart he said his prayers, and either held his peace, or bridled the mouth of foolish men with some reasonable word. Fools railed against that which they did not comprehend, and one who walked humbly and avoided every vanity seemed to their froward understanding to be distraught.

(2) But with modest aspect, like some flower of the field, Florentius went forth clad in a gray habit covered by a long cloak; and as some lily may grow among thorns and give forth her sweet odour when torn thereby, so was Florentius among his mockers; when derided he became yet more cheerful and made the sweet odour of his fame yet sweeter and more widely diffused by the patience which he showed. The Lord put upon him the

breastplate of faith, and armed His warrior with the virtue of perseverance so that the wantonness of men might not prevail to overturn his stable mind, which the Grace of God had strengthened within him; for he was zealous to suffer shame and threatenings for the Name of Jesus, knowing that which is written; “Blessed are ye when men shall speak evil of you and reproach your name as evil for the Son of Man’s Sake.” Therefore he waited diligently upon the Author of Life, Jesus the Son of God, Whom the Pharisees called a Samaritan and a deceiver; Who warned His disciples beforehand that they must suffer much enmity from worldlings, for that He himself before them suffered yet more bitter things from the envious Jews, “For,” saith He, “if they have persecuted Me, they shall also persecute you”; “The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have called the good man of the house Beelzebub, how much more them of his household?”

By these holy words he was mightily comforted, and cared not for the mockings of men, nor turned aside from the true path of humility which the truth doth teach, but through his contempt of the world and self-denial he strove to climb to the very heights of virtue. He chose rather to be called an outcast Lollard with his Brothers, or to be thought a madman by worldlings, than to be reputed a great lord and master. Therefore so far as in him lay he put aside the honourable title of Master, and desired to be called by his name only, as did also the other Brothers, though some of these were sufficiently learned and sprung from the wealthier families in the world. He would have nothing costly or beautiful by way of apparel, he desired nothing delicate for his food, he allowed only those things necessary for use, but nothing superfluous; naught save those somewhat simple and unadorned things which tend to lowliness and are no offence to worldlings—for these latter are taught better by an example of lowliness than by subtle arguments. Therefore by following the Common Life, and showing brotherly love to all; by being not highminded but condescending to things of low estate, he was now esteemed as a loving father and not feared as an austere master; for the outward signs of an honest character and the inward virtue of heavenly purity were seen reflected in him as in the brightest mirror.

CHAPTER X

Of his promotion to the priesthood and the abasement of his humility

(1) BUT since the humble do deservedly gain repute, and just praise is befitting to the meek, they who formerly were used to oppose the man of God did withhold their tongues from their unjust enmity, for they saw the constancy of his mind, and that his resolve in the Lord was firm.

Wherefore being converted to a dutiful regard for Florentius they began to commend the holiness of his life and to reverence him for the modesty of his garb and discipline, and also to love the devout zeal of his Brothers, which was founded upon the lowliness of Christ. And this indeed justly, for it was meet and right that one upon whom the Grace of God was poured out, making him blossom with many virtues, should be loved and extolled by all men. As the fame of his goodness increased, many clerks and lay folk came together in crowds to his house to hear the Word of God, and some of the Councillors and leaders of the State came to him for counsel, inasmuch as there was found in him the Wisdom of God, and in proportion to the greater virtue of his mind, a faith also greater than their own. Wherefore they heard him gladly and committed their consciences to him the more confidently in difficult and dark matters; and having listened to his words they did many good deeds that were pleasing to God.

(2) So the humble Master, filled with Charity, rejoiced over this harvest of souls and the spiritual progress of his Brethren, and was very careful for the needs of poor clerks, paying reverence to Christ the Lord in them. But the venerable Master Gerard, seeing that his beloved disciple Florentius was adorned with special gifts of devotion, determined that he should be promoted to the Priesthood, being moved thereunto by the inspiration of the

Holy Spirit and urged by the prayers of many Brethren. But Florentius, protesting that he was unworthy of so great an honour, humbly sought to be relieved of this burden; yet he was overborne by the insistence of the Brethren, and at length not daring to resist the monitions of Gerard he gave that assent to which the duty of obedience compelled him. But when he became a Priest he was not puffed up with human pride but was found to be so much the more humble in every deed, and in his garb, in proportion as he became greater in dignity and rank. Master Gerard has borne this witness of him, saying: "Once only did I cause a man to be ordained to the priesthood and I believe that he is worthy. In future I will be cautious not to do such a thing lightly, for I perceive that few are fit for such a calling."

Yet Florentius, as one that in his own eyes was truly small and of no worth, had no high thoughts of himself for his Ordination as a Priest; but in his heart he preferred the lower Brethren before himself, and spoke thus of a certain simple Clerk who was not yet admitted to the holy office: "Would that I could offer before the Judgement Seat of God the pen of that Clerk rather than the Chalice of my Priesthood."

CHAPTER XI

How seldom he went out, and of his instructive demeanour as he stood in the Choir

(1) BY his good and honourable character Florentius, the Lord's man, might easily be recognized by ignorant men and worldlings as one that was devout and the friend of God, and worthy to be the Vicar of Jesus Christ. At first therefore he was made Canon of St. Peter's Church in Utrecht, but resigning this prebend he accepted a Cure in Deventer, that he might be near Master Gerard and be instructed by his example and doctrine; wherefore he once said to a friend, "I hope that I shall not be a Canon all my life, but serve God in some lower station," and thus it came to pass to the eternal glory of God; for though he was held in great reverence for his holiness and abstinence, yet he utterly avoided honour from men, and for this cause refused to go out into public places and thought it his sole comfort to abide at home with his Brethren, for he knew that thereby he would make more progress himself and that his conduct would be an example of stability of purpose to others. And when he did go out into the streets he walked quickly, nowhere engaging in much talk; but saluting any acquaintance who met him with some brief word or an inclination of the head only; moreover, he paid so little heed to any outward manifestations of respect toward himself that often he did not notice those who met him, nor care to inquire whither they were going; but as he went to the Church he would pray or meditate of God as the Holy Spirit moved him.

(2) But owing to his great bodily weakness and the oft infirmities which fell upon him by reason of his excessive abstinence in the first fervour of

his devotion, he could not go daily into the Choir; yet on all great festivals, and on the anniversaries of Saints he rejoiced to attend Vespers so often as his health allowed, and to be present at High Mass. And though he was the senior Vicar in Deventer he always took his place on the left side of the Choir in the lower stall, although he was entitled to the highest seat next to the Canons. As he stood in the Choir he did not gaze about with wandering eyes, but stood very quietly turning towards the Altar, with all restraint and reverence. Being devoutly intent upon God and his own soul, he sang the Psalms so far as his weakness allowed in a low tone, observing the musical directions. He was so reverent and his aspect was so devout that many boys and chanters often gazed at him and admired his religious fervour, since no light-mindedness, for which he might be blamed, could be seen in any word or gesture. At that time I used to go into the Choir with the other scholars as I was ordered to do by Master John Boheme, who ruled the Scholars and Choristers strictly. And as often as I saw my Master Florentius standing there—though he did not look round—I was careful not to chatter, for I was awed by his presence because of the reverence of his posture.

(3) Once on a time it happened when I was standing near him in the Choir that he turned to share our book for the chanting, and he, standing behind me, put his hands upon my shoulder—but I stood still, hardly daring to move, bewildered with gratification at so great an honour. There were then in the Chapter of Deventer divers Canons and Vicars who were learned and men of approved life, strict and eager to perform the Divine Offices with all due honour; these held Master Florentius, that man of God, in reverence and deserved esteem, and when he was present, the more anxiously restrained all extravagance and levity; and the whole Choir was enlightened by the instructive demeanour of this great priest.

CHAPTER XII

Of the simplicity of his garb

(1) THE good Florentius, being a lover of simplicity and lowliness, knew that an ornate attire doth not make the Priest, but rather lowliness of heart and righteousness of character, and therefore put away from him all adornment in attire and everything that pertained to the pomps of the world and ostentation before men, so as to preserve the better his purity of conscience. So after that he was made a priest he sought not softer clothing as being more appropriate to himself than to others, but was contented with the Common and simple garb like the rest of the Brothers, and this he did that the outer garb might answer to the inner man. For having God ever before his eyes, he did not love that adornment and care for the body which passeth away, but kept his eye open to see the virtues of the soul.

(2) Yet he was careful not to give the least occasion of offence to the weak, either by his garb, or by anything that is a necessity of nature, choosing according to Christ's example that which is more proper to lowliness and in less esteem amongst men. Therefore he did not wear one garment on festivals and another on ordinary days, but only a more highly ornamented vestment at the Celebration of Mass on Feast Days for his reverence to the Sacrament, and in this he kept within the bounds of due decency.

The almuce that he wore was somewhat old and faded, and was in many places moth-eaten and threadbare. When I saw him come across to the Choir in such a garment I was grieved that a priest so good and honourable should go about in such mean and lowly garments. He did not wear elegant sandals like other Vicars in the Church, but in place thereof low and coarse wooden shoes, soled with old leather, which made no clatter as he entered the Choir. His cloak and robe were of grey cloth, for though his uncle who

loved him had given him a new robe, he would not wear it because it seemed too honourable, and he ever preferred simple things to costly. His hood was black, or dark in colour, and so worn as to cover both shoulders and the bare part of the neck, for so it was made for him. He wore scanty sleeves tied back with but few strings, the hinder parts were patched from time to time with new cloth as they wore through with age, for this humble priest of God did not blush to wear an ancient garment patched by the tailor, and indeed he and all his Brothers contended in holy rivalry which should wear the meaner garments, and each strove to surpass the other in this regard.

(3) On one occasion, when a Secular Priest was present, Florentius was discoursing devoutly of God, and his hearer standing near him was busied with the beautiful and curiously embroidered sleeves which he wore, turning his hands now in this direction now in that and Florentius looking kindly at him said: “My brother, see what sort of sleeves I wear, they do not occupy my mind nor disquiet me. To wear such long ones as thou dost would be a weariness and a burden to me.” Hearing this, and blushing somewhat, the other stood more quietly and taking the saying in good part, went away edified, being instructed in simplicity of attire by the example of Florentius.

(4) At another time he called to him the tailor who was to make him a new cloak, and said: “Sir, do you know how to make a mean garment?” and he answered: “I know not that I can do so, but tell me, Sir, what sort of garment thou dost desire?” Then said the humble Master Florentius to the tailor: “Make of that cloth four parts, and sew them together without folds that I may put on or take off the garment easily; so made it will be good enough for me.” To this the tailor wondering much replied: “O my beloved Master, how can this be? How can I wilfully destroy a good piece of cloth? I will make it well as is more suitable.” Then said the meek and lowly priest: “Why should one take care for the adorning of the outward man? For the love of God make it in the simplest way thou canst; for so is it more pleasing to me; since it is fitting that I should have simple garments for the edification of others.”

O noble Priest of Christ! who wert ever inclined to lowliness, who the better to please God didst put away all delicate living from thee!

CHAPTER XIII

Of his humble service among the Brothers

(1) CHRIST, the Light of the World, came into the world to enlighten the minds of the faithful by preaching the Word of Heavenly Life, and it was chiefly by the example of His humility that He did kindle the sullen hearts of sinners to love His Name; and He left this example as a pattern to all the faithful throughout the earth. For Christ so bore Himself among His disciples as if He were one of them, showing them the ministry of love and not exercising the lordship of power, so that if any is willing to imitate Him, the same is worthy to be honoured by Him, and to be made a ruler of all good things in the Kingdom of Heaven: for He saith: “I am in the midst of you as He that serveth,” and again: “The Son of Man is not come to be ministered unto but to minister and to give His life to many.” This rule of holy servitude Florentius that humble servant of Christ was zealous to follow with the Brothers, persuading all that clave to him of whatever age they might be to take their turn of servile work in love and in turn to bear the common burden, to shrink from no menial task, but gladly to occupy themselves with humble service, embracing the more eagerly those tasks which are deemed less honourable and are harder and more toilsome.

(2) So there grew up amongst them this holy custom, and approved virtue, that every one of the Brothers should do service for a week in the kitchen, and should there cook with all humility, or promptly and cheerfully fulfill the injunctions of the cook. For at that time all were ardent to perform the less honourable tasks, inasmuch as to labour with their hands for the Kingdom of God was thought to be a pleasant recreation. So Florentius, the good Father and kindly Master, wishing to set a good example before those whom he ruled, himself took his turn in the kitchen as far as he could, and when a neighbour, moved by compassion, said to him: “Why, good Sir, dost

thou occupy thyself in the kitchen? Hast thou none that can do this for thee? Would it not be better that thou shouldest go to the Church, and another cook for thee?” the humble servant of Christ answered: “Should I not rather strive for this to gain the prayers of all the other Brothers rather than my own prayers alone. For during the time that I am in the kitchen all the others are constrained to pray for me? I hope therefore to gain a greater blessing from the prayers of those that are in the Church than I could if I alone were praying.”

Thus he edified them all both by example and precept, seeking not what was pleasant to himself, but what was useful to others and a good example. Whenever he took his meals with the Brothers he placed the first dish upon the table with his own hands; and he grieved much because through the hindrance of his infirmity he was not able to take his place every day at the Common table of the Brotherhood. For this cause he used to eat in the kitchen alone with the cook, having a small table meanly served, because the weakness of his stomach suffered him not to take solid food. I myself, unworthy as I am, often made ready his table at his request, and brought from the buttery that modest draught which he desired, and I gladly served him with much cheerfulness of spirit.

CHAPTER XIV

How he laboured with his hands for the common good

(1) FLORENTIUS, who excelled all others in his character, and is worthy to be remembered as being among these devout men the most devout of all, never wished to be found in idleness, but strove to expend his precious time in some fruitful work, being careful above all things—although he was the holder of a benefice—not to eat his bread for naught and without working therefor. And what he learned and received from Master Gerard, this he carefully observed; for it was the Master's opinion that none should be admitted to the Community save he who was willing—according to the saying of St. Paul—to labour with his hands. For this is an holy occupation and one most profitable to all spiritual progress; hereby are the lusts of the flesh tamed, and the mind is the more readily bridled, being distracted from idle wanderings. By such work is hurtful indolence taken away, and thus we more easily avoid those foolish babblings which through such indolence do arise. And when the opportunity for chattering is taken from us, the work doth go forward under our hand, and he will ever be more fruitful in good who shall have been a faithful labourer. By this also is a wise provision made for the necessities of the Brothers, and the miseries of the poor are more freely relieved, for Almsgiving from those gains that are won in the sweat of the face are the more pleasing in the sight of God and more spotless, and the profit of honest labour doth relieve the indigent. For this reason the art of copying books was eagerly taken up by the brethren of his house in the earlier days, for this is more convenient for clerks than other work, and can be pursued more quietly, and it was introduced as their customary occupation for the common good. The venerable Father

Florentius himself set a bright example before the copyists that his title as their superior might not seem an empty one, and that he might enhance his priestly office by being a pattern of industry; wherefore he busied himself with smoothing the parchment and ruling and arranging the pages. For though he was less skilful as a copyist, yet with his own hand—though consecrated with the holy oil—he gave great help to the other writers by preparing all things necessary for their use.

(2) Occasionally, as opportunity arose and time permitted, he with a chosen companion would read and correct the books already written, or compile Sacred extracts from Holy Scripture for the consolation of the Brothers, or as exercises for others of the household; for he delighted and greatly rejoiced when he could spend his day in doing some good for the Community, knowing that this would be most pleasing to God. But owing to the multitude of clerks who came together to him when the fame of his goodness was noised further abroad his help was demanded by many persons outside the Brotherhood, both religious and learned men. Wherefore in the interest of the salvation of souls, it was fitting for him to engage himself upon higher matters, and often to abstain from his own personal affairs or from private study, and to prefer Spiritual gain before temporal advantages.

(3) Sometimes so many stood before his cell desiring to speak with and consult him, or to confess their secrets to a man so holy, that there was scarcely room for him to come forth, and he had barely time to spare for reciting the Hours and attending duly to the needs of the body; yet he left none uncomfited, but either settled the matter out of hand, or, if his petitioner desired it left him free to return to him on a future occasion. It happened sometimes that he began to recite the Hours, but could not finish the Psalm which he had begun because so many came to him one after the other; and that he might not yield to weariness and refuse to open the door to him that knocked, he said to himself, “Once more for the sake of God,” and this “once more” he did often repeat till “once” became “often,” for in his brotherly love he did patiently overcome the hardships and unrestfulness of these interruptions.

CHAPTER XV

Of his compassion toward the poor, the sick, and the friendless

(1) AMONGST other works of piety the virtue of compassion did especially grow and flourish in the heart of the good Father, a virtue which he showed and exercised by the frequent distribution of alms to the poor and to strangers; wherefore in justice one ought to say of him as is said of the righteous man in the Psalm: “He hath distributed, he hath given to the poor, his justice remaineth for ever,” for indeed he was a most loving father to the poor, a most kindly comforter to those in distress, and a most compassionate visitor of the sick. Being filled with the Spirit of God, he had the milk of compassion, and the wine of zeal and fervour, and did nurture the weak with the oil of Mercy; while he hated their evil passions and sins, yet he did display his detestation thereof and his mercy each in due season and with great discretion.

(2) He often sent meats that were for his own table to the sick and needy, and the herbs which were sent to him in charity, he with a charity still greater would share with others that did lack. He kept the names of the poor written down, and committed the care of them to one or two of the Brothers, bidding them provide for their honourable entertainment and the expenses of their maintenance. There were at that time certain honourable persons in the town of Deventer who feared God, men of good conversation who followed the counsels of Florentius, and certain Matrons wealthy and devout who were given up to charitable deeds, attending the Church of God regularly and honouring His priests. These ministered to God’s poor clerks with much kindness, and at the request and instance of Florentius did most willingly serve them. So good and beloved was the humble vicar of Christ

in the eyes of all that if he made a petition on behalf of any poor man, he soon obtained his request. He showed himself affable to the friendless and to strangers as if they were his friends and kinsmen, asking whence they came, and how they were called, begging them to come sometimes to visit him.

(3) This notable lover of Chastity hid not the light of his benevolence from the little ones, and the young who were striving after innocence of life and purity, but with pious words taught them to love Jesus and Mary, exhorting them to preserve their innocence, that being made like to the angels of God they might sing the Song of the Virgins in Heaven. To the sad and tempted he was cheerful and comfortable, so that if any were troubled or offended, the sight of Florentius, and a few words from him, would give such an one peace and consolation and he would return joyfully to his own business. This I have often tried in mine own person, as have my comrades in devotion, for we were instructed by his counsel and taught in the School of Christ by his excellent discourses. He did not shrink from lepers or others who were marred by any bodily deformity, but rather took care to show himself more kindly than usual to such outcasts, knowing that this was more pleasing to the Creator, and would gain greater glory for himself, because he thought upon the bond of Nature, and the image of God in man rather than the vileness of the person.

(4) I have seen one blind of an eye, and another lame of one foot, who were converted by him, and afterward became men of approved life. I knew also a leper who abode outside the city walls who in the grace of devotion came near to God's priest, and spoke with him as a friend; and many saw this and wondered at the humility of the Master in sitting by a leper. He also commanded that a draught of wine and a special dole should be given to the man, and after speaking many words of holy comfort to him he let him go away to his own abode with his companion.

CHAPTER XVI

Of his feeding the poor, and washing beggars

(1) BUT because as Holy Scripture teacheth, God loveth a cheerful giver, it is pleasant to tell further of the great compassion shown by this most charitable father—Florentius—toward the poor and those that were full of sores, the maimed, and such as had no friends to comfort them. Besides the alms that were applied daily to pious purposes in relieving mendicants, Florentius, this most pitiful father of the indigent, used to invite to his table twelve poor scholars every year, on the Feast of S. Gregory the Pope, in honour of that Saint, because he had read how Gregory himself used to entertain twelve poor men every day. I myself also by his direction brought to his house at dinner time certain poor persons whom he named to me, and these being refreshed with food and drink returned with joyful hearts to their Schools and rendered thanks to God for the benefits they had received, and expressed deep thankfulness to Florentius and his Brotherhood for their abundant hospitality. Then was most clearly fulfilled that saying of the Psalmist, which is chanted as a Grace before meat by many Religious orders: “The poor shall eat and be filled, they shall praise the Lord that seek Him, their hearts shall live for ever and ever.”

(2) So too, in the month of May, the Season when the wild herbs that are used as medicaments have their highest virtue, the good Father did not forget his poor; knowing that many were weak, ulcerous, and full of sores, he made them to come to his house upon an appointed day and hour to receive certain medicines, and to have their bodies bathed in warm water infused with aromatic herbs. And when they had been thoroughly bathed and washed he made ready for each a most cleanly bed for sudorific treatment And after receiving a cup of wine, and some words of comfort, they went away with great joy to their own homes, saying one to the other, “How

good and loving a man is this Lord Florentius! and how good are the Brethren who dwell with him! in that they give us such things for the Sake of God without money and without price!”

(3) Once about the Season of Lent, at a time of scarcity, when poor mendicants were borne down by want, many fled for refuge to the tender-hearted Father imploring comfort from him, hoping to find some relief, for no one ever came away from him empty or uncomforted. In this distressful time Florentius, the Father of pity, was filled with sympathy for the pain of those that suffered hunger, and for the devout poor, taking counsel with the Brothers as to the best way of succouring the needy who were in such straits that they had neither money in their purse, nor bread in their scrip. Then were the Brothers one and all fired with desire to help these multitudes of poor, especially at this Holy Season of Lent, which is observed as a time of Penance at which one ought to expend larger sums in Charity upon the needy who with many prayers ask for bread in the Name of God—as saith the Prophet Esias: “Deal thy bread to the hungry and bring the needy and the harbourless into thy house; when thou shalt see one naked, cover him, and despise not thine own flesh.” Therefore the Brothers did firmly determine to deny themselves somewhat and to contribute more largely to the poor, and for their sake add one hour of daily work to the usual period of labour throughout the Season of Quadragesima: and to hand the whole that they might gain by their copying in that hour to the Overseer of the poor, that therewith he might buy them the necessary victual and faithfully minister to them. The same was done by certain Brethren that were copyists and writers in other Religious Houses who of their own labour offered a sacrifice of alms to God, chastening themselves of their own will and refreshing the poor in all gladness.

(4) Who can worthily unfold all the pitiful acts of this most blessed Father toward the poor and strangers, but particularly toward the simple and them that are of the devout Household of Christ? But though all should be silent yet will I not hold my peace, but will continually sing of the compassions of Florentius, for by mine own experience did I prove the multitude of his mercies surely and without doubt during seven years of his life. Like the blessed Job indeed “He was feet to the lame, and eyes was he to the blind, an hand to the needy, a staff to the feeble, a comfort to the fallen, a cloak to him that was scantily clad.” One did rejoice for the alms

that were given him, another for the coat that was made for him, one would take away a cloak, another a hat, another shoes, another boots; another would receive a girdle and hosen, another books; another would rejoice that he had asked and received pens, ink, and paper. Thus each one rejoicing in his own gift would confess that from this honourable Lord Florentius, the father of the orphan and the needy, he had received not goods for the use of the body only, but also a medicine for his soul. My weak tongue doth not suffice to tell fully of his virtues and charitable deeds, for his conversation and that of his brethren doth surpass the reckoning of man.

It is just that I should not fear to say of them what is written of the Apostolic Saints: "They are men of mercy and their just deeds have not been forgotten. Their good works remain with their posterity, and all the Church of the Saints shall tell of their almsgiving."

CHAPTER XVII

Of his abstinence and the infirmities which came upon him by reason of his austerity

(1) THIS fervent and devout servant of God did chastise his body too rigorously with fast and watching when first he was converted; in the endeavour to restrain the concupiscence of the flesh, he did not consider with due care the weakness of his nature, but in the fervour of his spirit did so persecute the enemy within him, that by the weight of his austerity he did also overthrow one that had heretofore dwelt within him in friendship and loyalty. For he not only abstained from what was unlawful and superfluous, but also denied himself things necessary, so that he lost all appetite for food, and had no taste for the discerning of meats. Wherefore it once happened that in the absence of the cook he went into the buttery and drank oil out of a jar mistaking it for beer; nor did he know the difference until the cook asked him from which of the jars he had drunk, and then he knew of his mistake. At another time, at a certain Monastery, a draught of wine was brought him to drink by reason of his weakness and because of the loving care which the Brothers had for him, and when he had tasted thereof he said to one that stood by, “How sharp and bitter ye make your beer”; and the Brothers marvelled that he knew not the taste of wine from that of any other liquor. Therefore he took his victual for the more part as if he did not taste it, and rather because Nature compelled him to eat than because appetite or the flavour of any meat attracted him.

(2) Sometimes I went to visit him in his cell, where he sat upon his couch in bodily weakness, and I spoke to him with sympathy, being much grieved for his sickness. And once Brother James of Viana, who at that time ministered to him, brought him a strengthening decoction of herbs, saying,

“These are good herbs; I pray thee take thereof, are they not pleasant to the taste?” Then I heard Florentius answer, “A crust of bread would be more savoury to you than this is to me.” But although he was very weak and was compassed about by many infirmities of the body, yet did he not cease from the work of God and from gathering an holy harvest of souls. When he was strong enough to admit them to come to him he gave to those that sought him the counsels of salvation with renewed fervour. And these became the sweeter to his hearers as they were more and more assured that Florentius was beloved of God and was being tried by various bodily infirmities, as the precious gold is tried in the fire.

CHAPTER XVIII

How he often recovered by the aid of the prayers of the devout

(1) WHILE he suffered continually in the flesh yet was he instant in rendering thanks to God with all diligence, because the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the gaining of the glory of God to come. And he bore with patience the rod of the Lord “that was uplifted against him, as an wholesome discipline for his soul,” bethinking him that this was a sign of love, as the Apostle saith, “Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth.” Our good Lord, desiring to show how greatly the tried virtue of His sons doth please Him, and how the prayers of the righteous do avail much, showed mercy toward His beloved priest, who was often brought to the very extremity of weakness, though the physicians thought that there was no hope of saving his life by any human means. Florentius himself put all his hope in the Lord, Who with His saving grace doth raise up the deserving. So often therefore as perilous sickness did assail him he was commended to the fervent daily prayers of the neighbouring Religious Communities of Brothers, Clerks, and Nuns, that they might implore God to spare him yet a little, and save his life for the weal of many; and that the devout might not suffer sorrow upon sorrow as they must if they were bereft of a Father so beloved and a director so necessary to them.

(2) I myself sometimes was the messenger on such an occasion, and said to the Nuns, “Pray for our lord Florentius, for his sickness is heavy upon him.” And behold, the merciful God, who despiseth not the prayer of the poor, but doth readily hear the vows of the humble, restored his beloved and faithful servant to health, “to make known His power to the sons of men.”

(3) In those days there was one renowned for his knowledge of medicine, named Everard Eza, Curate of Almelo, a man of much skill and repute amongst the doctors of medicine; this man, being inspired by the grace of the Religious Life, became the familiar friend of Florentius and his Brothers, and others who were vowed to Christ; he was wont to come often to Florentius, and to give him freely the relief that his art afforded; and the Brothers loved him much and received him with reverence. He showed great diligence to heal his beloved friend, and was often very helpful to him; also he relieved the sadness of the Brothers, and consoled them by his confidence that there was hope that the life of Florentius would be saved, saying to them, “I do put my faith in God rather than in the art of medicine, considering this namely, that it doth surpass human strength for one to have lived so long with such a weakly body, and unless the special grace of God were preserving him, and the prayers of many were being offered for him, he would immediately die, or rather he would have been dead long since. It is good, therefore, to pray faithfully for him, for the saving of his life doth depend particularly upon the Grace of God.”

CHAPTER XIX

How upon an Easter Even he was healed by a Vision of Angels

(1) HIS sickness came upon him more grievously and oftener during the season of Lent than at other times in the year because the Lenten fare was somewhat trying and ill to digest; but though at this season his bodily weakness was greater yet he offered himself to keep the fast with a mind even more cheerful than usual; once his strength so drooped owing to his abstaining almost entirely from food—and the consequent weakness of his stomach—that there was scarcely a hope that he could live till Easter. But the devout prayers of the Brothers cried without ceasing to God for him, and they implored that answering Grace Which they had often known before. At that time all human aid was failing and they had recourse to the power of God, that mightiest source of comfort.

(2) So when the fast was over and the glorious Festival of the Lord's Resurrection was at hand, this chosen man of God was resting on his bed steeped in a sweet sleep; and behold! on this most holy Paschal night he was thought worthy to receive the comfort and consolation of an Angelic vision. He saw two angels appear before him, one standing upon the right side of his bed and the other upon the left; one lifted up his hand and brandished a sword over the head of the sleeper, as if in act to strike, but the other stayed the blow, and forbade him, saying, "Smite him not, for his life shall yet be whole within him and he shall not die." Amazed at this vision sent from heaven, Florentius awoke, raised as it were from death to life and wondrously comforted in the Lord; calling his servant—who was sleeping in the cell near at hand—he said, in a confident voice, "Arise, and prepare me something to eat to-day; I feel that I am mending, and we must keep

feast in the Lord together!” Then the servant, filled with great joy, hastened to do as Florentius commanded, and all who heard thereof were filled with amazement and joy that he who they had lately feared must die had begun so quickly to amend.

(3) This vision he afterward told to his uncle, the Canon of St. Mary’s Church in Utrecht, who loved him with all his heart. He did not name himself, but told how it was revealed to a certain man that he should live awhile longer. Upon this his uncle did congratulate him greatly, and blessed God who had sent His Angel and saved Florentius from the destruction of death.

The illustrious Florentius lived for several years after this, to the comfort of all devout persons, both clerks and lay folk, who came to him from divers parts and countries for the healing of their souls: for this man of God and the Community of Brothers, who were gathered together in his house, became by their precept and example leaders in holy conversation to such devout persons, to the Glory of God Almighty.

CHAPTER XX

Of one who fell into a well and was drawn out unhurt

(1) IT happened upon a time that many came together to the ancient house of the beloved Father Florentius to hear the Word of God, and while he was discoursing to them with holy exhortation, a certain man who was sitting with others on the edge of a well was overcome with sleep and fell back headlong into the water. All who were present were terrified by his fall and looked down into the well lamenting the mischance—and behold! by the protection of God the man stood safe and unhurt upon his feet in the water of the well, to the wonder of all. And hastily seizing a pole which hung above they let it down through the well's mouth and drew forth alive the man who, as they had thought, was almost drowned and dead. Seeing him freed from so great danger they rendered thanks to God Almighty, and were not a little comforted in that He had not allowed one to suffer sudden death in that house.

(2) This was told me by a citizen of Kempen who was present at the time and as a youth had been often in Deventer; he also told me many good things of this man of God and his Brotherhood. I have often drawn water for use in the kitchen out of this same well, which is somewhat narrow, and therefore the thing that was done doth tend yet more strongly to the Glory of God, who is present to save lives from danger, beyond all that we ask of Him.

CHAPTER XXI

Of the vision of the Rood which appeared over his house

(1) THIS Community of Brothers dwelling in the house of Florentius was wholly pleasing to God and beloved of Him, and being gathered together to His praise was refulgent with virtue and adorned with lofty and meritorious deeds. Lowliness, which therein was the chief of all virtues, was sought after by all from the lowest to the highest; and did make a Paradise of this earthly house, transforming mortal men into heavenly pearls to be as living stones meet for glory in the temple of God.

(2) Here under the strict discipline of the Rule, obedience, the mother of virtue, and the lamp of discernment, so flourished, that to obey without hesitation became the highest wisdom, and for one to neglect the counsel or lightest word of his Superior would have been a deed of horror and disgrace.

Here the inward manifestations of love, that is for God, and its outward manifestation, that is charity to one's neighbour, burned with so hot a flame that the hard hearts of sinners who heard the holy discourses of the Brothers were melted to tears, and they that had come thither cold at heart, being there kindled by the fire of the Word, went away rejoicing, heedful to sin no more. Here the armour of spiritual warfare was kept bright for use against the several sins of man, and old and young alike did learn to fight bravely against the devil, their own flesh, and the deceits of the world. Here the memory of the ancient Fathers, and the pattern of the holy conversation of the monks of Egypt—which had lain as it were half dead upon the earth—were restored to life; and the manner of life of the clergy rose to that

standard of the highest perfection which was set by the practice of the Primitive Church.

Here were heard devout exhortations to the spiritual warfare. Here amid their daily meditations the Brothers did full often dwell upon that most holy and sorrowful Passion of our Saviour Jesus Christ in loving recollection, and ruminate thereupon; because to recall that Passion and to dwell upon It doth surely conduce to the soul's health, doth avail to cure the deadly bite of the serpent, to calm the tempests of passion in the heart, and to uplift the dullard mind from things of earth to things of Heaven through the imitation of the Crucified Lord.

(3) And because the ardour of their devout thanksgiving, and their remembrance of the benefits that God had bestowed upon them leaped up as a flame in the hearts of many; and because this holy Community was ever making progress to still better things, being instructed by the example of the revered father Florentius utterly to despise the world; therefore the good God Who giveth His blessing and grace to the humble, failed not to cherish His faithful servants by giving to them holy comfort and inward joy. Bringing forward one instance out of many I will add here in a few words the story of a marvellous sight, which God Who knoweth all hidden things thought good to show above that house which He had consecrated with unction from on high.

(4) There was a devout disciple of Florentius, a young branch of his planting, who was startled by a strange vision in the night, and at first was altogether afraid, but afterward was made joyful by the wondrous and divine power of God. For as he lay upon his pallet, a mighty wind arose from the north, and there came a fierce tempest shaking all the earth as if the day of the Last Judgement were at hand, that day which all flesh must fear. Terror-stricken at this dreadful tempest the young man began to think how he should flee, and whither turn aside from the face of the wrath of God; but being caught in a strait place he looked upward to Heaven, and lo! there was seen clearly in the sky the sign of the Cross bearing the Figure of Christ, the Author of our Salvation. And as he gazed upon this holy Figure of the Crucified, pendent in the air with hands outstretched and pierced with the nails, the glory of Whose Presence doth lighten all the world, the tempest ceased. And the Rood moved onward until It stood over the house of Florentius where dwelt those that truly despised the world, the servants

of the Holy Cross, at Whose coming and before Whose Presence the whole house was lifted from its foundations as if to meet the Saviour, and nowhere touched the ground; and after bending reverently towards the Cross it returned again to its former stable position; but the Image of the Cross went onward and stood above the wall over against the door of the house through which the Brothers went forth day by day. Seeing these things the young man spread forth his hands toward the Cross and began to pray and implore to be protected from the fear of the dread Judgement, and straightway he was caught up from where he lay and placed within the door of Florentius' house as if in a place of safety beneath the Wings of the Crucified. Then being overjoyed and, as it were, safe from every danger, he awoke in unspeakable gladness, and, wondering greatly, returned thanks to God who had thought good to give him such a revelation concerning the holy Brotherhood to which he was zealously from thenceforth to cleave, and continually to reverence the life thereof which was hid with Christ.

CHAPTER XXII

Of his patience, gentleness, and love toward all men

(1) A CERTAIN Senator, who relied upon his own worldly cunning, was not afraid to trouble Master Florentius, this man of God, but shamelessly strove to deprive him of his benefice, thinking perchance that no one would oppose him, or answer on behalf of Christ's vicar, who seemed to be devout and meek towards them that did him hurt. But when the cause came on and Florentius should have answered his adversary as to the plaint against him, the Master made use of no wordy argument or eloquent pleading, but replied shortly and humbly after this manner: "If ye have a better right than I, in the Name of God maintain it." And they that stood by wondered, and were edified at his words.

(2) But one of the canons, a man zealous for God, who would not suffer the just and innocent to be oppressed, said to him, "Beloved Master, why dost thou speak thus? Hast thou so little care to keep thy benefice? Yet shall not the enemy gain that which he seeketh, but we on thy behalf will look to it that thou keep that which thou dost rightfully possess." The adversary hearing these words was silent, and departed, having gained nothing, for indeed all men knew, both high and low alike, that the devout Master was a worthy Priest of Christ, and one whose life and doctrine had led many to despise the world. For he had made them that were aforetime great and worldly-wise to become lowly and simple-minded brothers, and some that were sufficiently instructed for the devout life and the dignity of the Priesthood, he had made able ministers therein as the sevenfold grace of the Holy Ghost increased in them.

(3) But he thought it his greatest gain and chiefest joy to have shown to any the way of eternal salvation, and to have recalled them from sinfulness to continence; for these things he was revered by men of the world, honoured by the great, and most tenderly loved by the good and the devout; his earnest life, his love of God, made perfect; his dutifulness to his neighbour, his bounty toward the poor, his honesty to his fellows, his kindness to the afflicted made him to be so beloved of all. Wherefore one said of him: "There is no Monk whom I love and respect so much as Florentius; I look upon him as upon an Angel of God." He, however, took no pleasure in his own reputation, but rather in the conversion of men and the progress of the Brotherhood, whose numbers were increased daily, for in his time the Lord bestowed His Grace without stint upon them. For this cause his name, which was in great esteem, and the good report of his reputation reached even to strange cities, and men both in Deventer and afar off praised and commended him greatly. Yet he thought not of the praise that men gave him, nor weighed it at all; yea rather he held it worthless and derided it, for having cast his eye upon certain laudatory letters that were sent him he threw them behind a chest, saying, "Is this all of which they have to write? Good were it if they had said nothing on such a matter."

CHAPTER XXIII

Of his devout exhortation to spiritual prayer

(1) MASTER FLORENTIUS, that notable fair flower of the priesthood, that fervid zealot for souls, not only took thought for the Brothers of his house, but was also instant in planting the seeds of the Word of Salvation amongst other neighbouring Communities of Clerks and from time to time communed with them and piously exhorted them to have peace and charity towards one another, either preaching himself or sending some suitable Brother of his house. When he visited them all the inmates rejoiced, desiring to hear the Holy Word from the mouth of God's Priest, for the Holy Ghost spoke through his mouth to comfort that little Flock which was eagerly and devoutly willing to obey.

(2) In one of his discourses he spake this word of advice. "Every man should set before him daily these resolutions, namely, to earnestly strive to amend his life: to struggle anew against his temptations; to pluck out his vices, to strive with special courage to overcome those sins which do more easily beset him; to do violence to himself for Christ's sake because 'the Kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away.' " It is profitable also for a man to lay his passions and perplexities bare before some discreet brother, one who hath tried knowledge of the Way of God. It is well not to strive in the light of one's own understanding only, but rather to trust another, to humbly receive his counsel, and gladly to follow him as a director, for this is a great help to those that are newly converted and a wholesome sign of spiritual progress.

Therefore a man who doth so resolve to serve God continually, diligently to amend his life and to keep himself carefully from all sin, doth thereby become more worthy and more acceptable than if he fed an hundred poor persons without making such a resolution to govern himself; because the

greatest gift that man can offer to God is a good and perfect will to serve Him all the days of one's life. So long as a man doth abide by his holy purpose his death cannot be ill, for though he die, I do trust that he will be in a state of Salvation, and shall find mercy, because his intent was good, and a good will shall be counted to him for righteousness as if he had carried out his purpose: as holy David doth confess, saying, "O Lord, thou hast crowned us with a shield of thy good-will."

Many other words of comfort spake he to strengthen the devout young men who were gathered together in his house from divers parts to employ their time in spiritual study, not in the School of learning only, but also in the School of Christ.

(3) Some of these would note his words in a book, and eagerly show them to such as had been absent, quoting these words of Divine eloquence amongst themselves with a far keener zest than worldlings show in repeating witty sayings. He abstained altogether from dealing with deep questions, subtle arguments and difficult matters, knowing that such things yield but little edification to devout minds, but rather are often an hindrance to heartfelt repentance, and overturn the faith of the innocent. And thus it hath been found with many men, that those who looking closely into curious matters leave the plain and lowly way of Christ, do thereby sow into themselves the seeds of many falls and errors.

(4) A certain learned monk was once arguing with a Carthusian, on the ground that his order being devoted to that solitude and peace which give a man leisure for the things of his own soul, it would seem to produce scarcely any fruit in the Church of God; but the good monk made this wise and apt reply: "We would gladly do those things which ye preach and teach, but we believe that contempt of the world is better taught by acts of penitence than by beautiful sermons and many wanderings."

A certain Jew who had been converted to the Christian faith hearing the report of the holy life of Master Florentius, desired to confer with him about the Patriarchs and Prophets of old, because he was thought to be learned in the old law and in Hebrew, and was by many called "Rabbi," after the manner of the Jewish sect; and when he came into the presence of Florentius that Man of God received him kindly and heard him patiently, conferring with him in all gentleness and charity, urging him to keep the true faith in Christ and to labour in good works; but as for those questions

of the Law that pertain not to salvation, and those genealogies of the men of old, he would not breathe a word upon them, not because he was ignorant in such matters, but because they bring no edification.

CHAPTER XXIV

Of his effectual preaching and his knowledge of the Scriptures

(1) THIS revered Priest preached not smooth flatteries, but testified clearly of the Truth; his aim was not worldly eloquence but simple instruction in conduct and to lead his hearers by reasoning to reject the world after the example of the Saints. He sought not money from the rich, nor honour among the great, but discoursed more freely with simple folk, on whose behalf he was instant with those in high places that they should be mindful of the poor, and “by means of the mammon of unrighteousness make to themselves friends in the habitations of the Kingdom of Heaven.” Could any lightly refuse to hear his intercession? Verily he dared not do so lest an offended God should refuse to hear his own petitions.

(2) Once a priest who had charge of the Church of Deventer, and was a good friend to Florentius, came to him offering him service in sincere goodwill and said, “My beloved Master, if I can do anything to please thee, spare me not”; and that good father answered, “For the present time there is nothing save that thou wouldest show thyself to be well disposed to the Brothers and Sisters who are placed in thy charge, that they be not troubled by them of the world and froward men”; and the other piously assenting to this, replied, “I will gladly do this for the love of God and of you all that ye may be also mindful of me.”

Master John Boheme also, who was Rector of the Scholars, and Vicar of the Great Church, under whose direction I long attended the school, was a friend to Florentius, and heard him gladly, doing what he knew would be pleasing to God. And when the time to pay the fees was come, each scholar brought what was justly due, and I also put my fee into his hand and asked

for a book which I had deposited as a pledge for payment. And he having some knowledge of me, and aware that I was under the care of Florentius, said, “Who gave thee this money?” and I answered, “My lord Florentius.” “Then go,” said he, “take back his money, since for love of him I will take nothing from thee.” So I took back the money again to my lord, Florentius, and said, “The Master hath given back my fee for love of thee”; and Florentius said, “I thank him and will repay him, after another fashion with gifts more excellent than money.” He knew by his discerning spirit what answer to make to everyone, and by his gift of counsel could supply an wholesome medicine both to the learned and unlearned, and all who sought aid for their divers needs, but he required no earthly reward for such service.

(3) Wherefore one who had committed himself to his direction said, “As often as I have followed the counsels of Florentius, it hath been well with me; but whensoever I have striven in the light of mine own understanding evil hath ever happened to me, and I have repented that I acted not according to his direction.” “His knowledge of the Holy Scriptures shone brightly like some ray from heaven within him, and his mind was illumined with so pure a light of divine radiance that whether he was reading the Old or New Testament some mystic interpretation of every passage came to him, and he everywhere found something to instruct him and lead him to God, the Fount of all knowledge and the End of every word.” The books that he kept to his hand were simple moral Treatises, especially the “Mirror for Monks,” and certain manuals of virtuous exercises against sin wherewith he trained himself and his fellow soldiers in Christ’s army to fight triumphantly against the temptations of the devil. But the Novices, the inexperienced, and those that were swollen with worldly pride, and those that were yet tainted with love of carnal things, he did dissuade from studying deep and subtle questions, and from prying curiously into dark and doubtful matters.

(4) Therefore he taught that all such must first learn to humble themselves, to know well their own weakness, to submit themselves utterly to their Superiors, to prefer themselves before no man, to keep peace and amity with all, to have the fear of God ever in their heart, and having made their foundation sure in lowliness, at length by the indwelling grace of the Holy Ghost to climb to the height of clear knowledge and the light of that

full vision of God which is promised to the pure in heart by that saying of the Lord, “Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.”

(5) They that seek to be thought subtle rather than to be humble, and desire knowledge more than a good life are easily puffed up, and are carnally minded; such men Florentius would severely reprove, and recall to a wholesome knowledge of their own weakness by humiliation and frequent exercises of devotion. When it was necessary for him to impeach any, he was held in such awe that none ventured to contradict him, or excuse himself, by reason of the reverence inspired by his holy life, which none durst offend lest they should incur the wrath of God by not humbly obeying such directions.

CHAPTER XXV

How he set a guard upon his tongue and avoided oaths

(1) ONCE when he was residing at Amersfoort he was received with all veneration by the inhabitants of that city and by the great men of the district, who visited him from time to time in pious devotion. Then also certain honourable men came to dine with him and the Brothers, in order to hear his discourse, desiring to enjoy familiar intercourse with him, and to be instructed by his good example and doctrine. These he treated kindly, exhorting them with wholesome counsel according to their station, and when they had heard the Word of God they returned severally to their own homes with thanksgiving.

(2) And when they had departed he briefly admonished the Brothers, saying, “It is a dangerous thing to speak and to associate with the Great and them of the world.” It is not expedient to flatter the rich, nor is it convenient that the inner secrets should be told to them; wherefore it is needful for a man to look carefully to what he saith to such, lest they be scandalized by any light word or unseemly action. For their eyes are ever looking upon us to consider our bearing, by reason of the good report which they hear of us. Let us stand therefore upon our guard, and set a good example to those from without who seek to visit us, for they see our outward actions only, and from these judge of what is within. Although we are not perfect in all things, let us take care that we give no ill example nor occasion of stumbling to the weak. These guests of ours are too kind to us, and perhaps their kindness is not to our profit. Let us not be over-pleased with empty praise, for it is our duty to be simple and lowly. It were better therefore to return quickly to our former dwelling, where there are many who take less

thought of us, and some who even mock, and speak evil of us, a thing which is very profitable, and doth constrain us the more to turn again to God.

(3) And thus Florentius was guarded and thoughtful in all his speech, especially before them of the world and persons whom he knew not. Likewise he was strict in avoiding that most evil custom of swearing, which is common among men of the world; and he forbade any of his Community in their daily talk to use such phrases as “Verily I do swear,” or “Of a surety I swear”; lest by such heedless swearing they should pile up sin on sin. Wherefore whenever he wished to lay stress upon any notable or important matter, or when he must bear testimony to anything, he would not lightly or hardily introduce the form of an oath, but would answer in his gentle way, “This is the conclusion of the matter,” or “this is surely so”; and thus he satisfied his questioner. Nor would he confidently affirm anything wherein he might be mistaken, but remembering the saying of the Lord, “Let your yea be yea and your nay, nay,” he was careful to guard against any slip of the tongue, and to instruct others by his good example, and by telling the plain truth; wherefore men trusted his word without an oath rather than that of others whose tongues had the evil custom of much swearing.

CHAPTER XXVI

Of three temptations that are full of peril to the devout

(1) MASTER FLORENTIUS being a most skilful and mighty champion in the Spiritual contest used to say that there were three temptations, perilous above all others, which hidden beneath the cloak of good motives do deceive many; and unless a man resist these in due time, that is at the very outset, they lead little by little to a final overthrow, or make the indolent wretchedly lukewarm. But this doth make the matter worse, that through the subtilty of the devil's wiles many are too heedless of such temptations, and scarce seek to be informed by men of prudence and knowledge as to the greatness of the perils into which they may fall.

(2) The first temptation is when one, newly converted, doth desire to return to his own country and to visit parents and friends; for such an one a return to the world, on the pretext of doing good and in the hope of converting worldlings, is often the occasion of his neglecting his own soul, although he may think to gather fruit in his own country. And while he dallieth there amid vain and inconstant persons, he doth expose himself to the winds and waves of temptation. Experience hath often shown how one that is light-minded, and not yet firmly founded in virtue, when he doth join himself to them of the world without restraint, is either entangled by their sins, or, under stress of temptation, doth grow cold toward the good courses he had begun. Therefore is it good for a man continually to flee from everything that is hurtful to the soul, and not to return to his country or his friends unless some notable cause compel him. Let him never be presumptuous about himself, but be suspicious of this present world that is everywhere filled with poisoned snares; let him follow the counsel and

sayings of his Superior, for this in every case is the safer and surer way. Of ten men who associate for long with their kindred or friends, scarce one or two return unhurt, and it doth often happen that they who remain in the world, having withdrawn from their good resolutions become even worse and more worthless than other men; and rejecting the Grace of God blush not to resume those evil courses which they did once despise.

(3) The second temptation is when one that is a layman, wishing to be a Clerk, doth through this desire leave his lowly station, and retire from the holy Community in order that he may acquire learning and become great.

Wretched man! he knoweth not how evilly he is deceived when leaving his lowly station and obedience he seeketh higher place. Such an one is soon puffed up by a little knowledge and is slow to become a good Clerk. God grant that he become not altogether a worldling; that of his own motion and for the sake of worthless learning doth risk the loss of virtue and blacken the repute of a good name.

(4) The third temptation is when one that is already a Clerk and learned doth aspire to the Priesthood, to high preferment or to any other dignity, on the plea of some holy motive such as that of being the more able to be of profit to others, or of teaching better or of preaching more frequently. Although such an one may seem to have a good motive, yet inwardly he is weighed down by grievous pride in that he is in haste to go up higher so as to appear greater than his fellows. In that he loveth not lowly subjection and is unwilling to despise himself, he doth diligently beseech his friends that they recommend him for promotion, but heedeth not the danger of his own soul.

Alas! when he hath attained that little short-lived shadow of glory, gotten with a great effort, an effort indeed far greater than that which would suffice to deprive him of every honour, in how evil a case will he find his conscience.

(5) Let him who would be delivered from these three temptations pray God every day to save him from pride and vain conceit, and keep him in lowly subjection and perfect obedience; for pride doth make a man to be inwardly blind and without savour, and outwardly a vain babblers, presumptuous, ignorant of himself and despising others; and, what is worse, to seek lordship over others is clearly enough a sign of perdition and leadeth to many evils. When a certain Brother was talking with Florentius in his

cell the Master said, amongst other things: “Ye should study to give yourselves to lowliness, then may ye make progress and become worthy of the Grace of God.”

CHAPTER XXVII

Of his sending forth the Brothers to gather fruit in divers places

(1) FLORENTIUS, being most fervent in the love of Christ and one to whom to live was Christ and to die was gain, desired to bear fruit in his season; therefore he took care to be of profit to many, that they might attain the Kingdom of everlasting salvation, persuading them to despise this miserable world that passeth away. To this end he sent many persons to found several monasteries and new houses for the conversion of others. Some of these Brothers went to Windesheim, some to Mount St. Agnes, some to Northorn, some to Gelders, some to Holland; some became Priors of Monasteries, other Superiors of Communities, and Confessors to the Monks: and of these there are certain still alive who knew this most devout Master Florentius, the beloved of God, while he was yet living in the flesh, and can bear sure testimony as to his saintly life.

(2) Likewise the Holy Orders of Carthusians. Cistercians, and Benedictines contain men not unknown to me who were worthy to see and hear both Florentius himself and his Brothers when they tarried in Deventer; these will bear witness that I speak the truth.

Also at the time when this notable priest of God shone as a light and flourished in Deventer, there were many other devout priests in the Diocese of Utrecht who instructed the faithful with holy discourse and knew how to bear strict rule over Communities whether of Brothers or of Nuns. All these submitted themselves humbly to Florentius with all due reverence, and gladly consulted that angelic man in difficult cases, preferring to trust his prudence and discernment rather than their own judgement. For they saw that in him above all other men the grace of Divine wisdom flourished pre-

eminently, and though he lived in the midst of crowds yet, like a lily of the valley, bedewed with the water of wisdom, he kept the whiteness of his purity, and far and wide diffused the odour of his good reputation.

(3) At this time also there lived in the Diocese of Utrecht one Master Wermbold, a famous preacher and Confessor to the Nuns of St. Cecilia. He was an ardent lover of Holy Scripture and a great friend to the reverend Father Florentius; and the common people loved to hear and see him.

At Amersfoort there was Master William Henry, the Founder of that Community of Clerks who afterward became Canons Regular. In Zwolle there was Master Henry Goude, a notable preacher, a despiser of Mammon, and a humble Confessor to the Béguines; likewise Master Gerard Kalkar, the Director of the devout Clerks, and an excellent instructor in virtue.

In Holland there flourished certain famous priests, learned in the Law of the Lord, and notable for their words and deeds, some of whom were fellow soldiers with Master Gerard Groote, and very dear to Florentius, and these gathered no small harvest for the Lord by converting men and edifying Communities of the Devout. In Haarlem there was Master Hugo, called the Goldsmith, and his priests; in Amsterdam Gisebert Dow, the founder of the two monasteries, and the renowned Director of many Nuns. In Medenblic Master Paul, who was altogether devoted to God and a man of probity. Master Gerard has made mention of these in his letters, and it was through them that the Devout Life first began and made progress in Holland.

(4) Moreover at Doesbruch in Gelders there was Master Derick Gruter, a laudable man and a Father to many Nuns; he was aforetime a disciple of Gerard, and told me many good things of him. It were a lengthy task to mention by name each one of those devout Fathers who began to flourish in the time of Gerard and were contemporaries with Florentius; men who taught us to despise the vanities of the world, and to live humbly and continently, and left to them that followed after a bright example of holy conversation by their patience and obedience.

CHAPTER XXVIII

Of his happy passing from this world and his burial in the Church

(1) JESUS, out of his abundant kindness, doth stablish and redeem the faithful, and hath most surely promised them Eternal life and a full recompense, saying: “Everyone that hath forsaken father or mother or other earthly ties for my Name’s Sake shall receive an hundredfold and shall possess life everlasting.” He therefore saw fit as a reward to the holy Florentius His faithful servant—who was adorned with many virtues and had been proved by divers burdens and infirmities—to deliver him out of the prison house of this flesh, and to remove him to His own Kingdom in Heaven, whereat the Angels did rejoice.

(2) So when Florentius by his counsel and aid had founded as many devout Communities and Monasteries as he could and had instructed the lowly flock of his own house in the ordinances of peace and brotherly love according to Christ’s good pleasure, and had carefully guarded them therein, he began inwardly to sigh and ardently to long to see the citizens of the heavenly country and the glory of Christ, toward Whom he had confidence in all things, and Whom he loved above all else.

Wherefore with true devotion he asked that the Body of the Lord should be administered to him, and gazing thereupon with faith unwavering, and adoring the same with the reverence that is due, he said: “Oh! my Beloved Lord God, pardon me that I have so often touched and received Thee so unworthily.” At these words many were pricked to the heart and wept, and one of the Canons who heard his words groaned deeply, saying: “Then what should I say, miserable sinner that I am, if a man so good doth feel and say such things about himself!”

But Florentius, having received the Very Body of God, and being fortified with the grace of Christ, gave himself up wholly to the good pleasure of God, and so long as he could speak he poured forth words of most wholesome comfort to his beloved Sons and Brothers.

(3) Amongst other things worthy to be remembered, he commended the unity of Brotherly Love, saying: “All who dwell in one house should be one in thought, should hold one purpose in the Lord, and should ever aim at conforming to one standard, without varying, in simple obedience to their superior. Wheresoever the Brothers do strive in fervency of spirit to be of one mind and to conform themselves in all things by the pattern of Christ’s humility, there is peace, there is spiritual progress, there is a house well ordered. Abide in your lowly simplicity and Christ shall abide with you.”

After this holy exhortation he set one of his priests over the whole Community, lest they, the Lord’s flock, should remain without a director, and being set amid the waves of the world, should be as a ship that hath not a proper helm; therefore he set over them Amilius, a devout man, wise and learned, and one that was not backward in zeal for God and for the salvation of souls, bidding that each one of them should have recourse to him, and obey him willingly. When he had quietly settled these and other matters he came to the last moment of this present life, for his bodily weakness was increasing.

(4) Now the most sacred Festival of the Annunciation was at hand, for this was the Vigil of that Feast, in honour of the glorious Mother of God, most Blessed Mary, ever Virgin! Most Holy Mother of Jesus Christ, whom Florentius the devout Vicar of her Son had ever loved with deep devotion. So, after the hour of Compline, when the customary Antiphon had been chanted in honour of Our Lady, and the Angelus had rung at the close of day he made an end of his life on earth while the Brothers round him prayed with sighs and tears. It was no marvel that they did so, for the might of their deep love constrained them to weep when their most beloved Father, the light and mirror of all the devout, the comforter of all that were troubled, was taken away from the light of temporal day, yet when they that loved him thought upon the sober and modest life of this most excellent priest, their pious faith did comfort them with the hope that glory in heaven should not be denied him, through Jesus Christ, Whom he had loved with all his

heart, to Whom he had clung continually till the very instant of death, and served with the full devotion of faith.

(5) So Master Florentius, this Priest beloved of God and man, passed from this world in the fourteen hundredth year after the Incarnation of the Lord, during the reign of Pope Boniface IX, being forty-nine years old as I reckon, or but little more. He lived in good and holy conversation for nearly sixteen years after the death of the venerable Master Gerard, and during this time he gathered much fruit among the people of God, in Deventer and the whole Diocese of Utrecht. For his laudable life, let Christ Who adorned our time with a star of so bright a lustre, be praised and glorified for evermore.

On the day following the Canons and Clerks assembled, and the poor body, worn by long continued chastisement, was carried by the Canons and Priests in procession to the Church of St. Lebuin and there interred with the rites proper to burial and all reverence, before that Altar in the Church which is dedicated in honour of St. Paul. The chosen Priest of God, as became a humble servant of Christ, had himself desired to be buried in the Cemetery with the Brothers who had died before him, and that no further honour should be paid him; but that Reverend Master Rambert, the Dean of Deventer, would by no means allow this, but determined rather, and that most rightly, that he should be buried with honour in a prominent place within that Church of which he had been a priest notable for virtue and adorned with learning.

CHAPTER XXIX

Of a vision which was seen after his death, and of the great glory which he attained

(1) THERE was, in the city of Gorichem, a certain man named John Hermann, whose life was good and his reputation honourable, and his wife was called Jutta. These two did alike live after the commandments of God, and drew many others to serve Him; they did often talk together of God upon holy days in their own house, and gladly showed hospitality to many Religious who came to visit them. Both of these were well known to Florentius, and learned from him the manner of holy conversation, and they set an example of life before their neighbours.

Now shortly after the death of Florentius, the aforesaid John did also depart from this world, and on a certain day, Jutta, who was most devout toward God, was occupied with prayer in her chamber. And having finished her devotion she arose to go forth from her chamber, and as she was opening the door she suddenly heard the window of the room open behind her.

(2) Looking back therefore she saw some one enter by the window who was clad round with a glory of light and most lovely to look upon, being in face like her husband, and she said, “Art thou there, John, my beloved husband?” and that other replied, “It is I, but call me no more thy husband”; and Jutta asked, “How is it with thee?” and he answered, “I am saved, and I enjoy the happiness of Heaven and the Presence of God.” Then Jutta asked, “And how is it with our father, Lord Florentius?” and he answered, “Florentius hath a glory that is truly great; and all his works were found to be upright and good,” and he added, “Remain thou in this house and change not thine abode, for thou shalt die ere long; and tell this to Adelaide the

daughter of Thomas, the Superior of the Sisterhood,” and then the Vision departed. After these things Jutta spent the rest of her days, though they were but few, with a heart so fervent toward God that all worldly things seemed to her but as worthless dung; and it is manifest by this sign alone, that the aforesaid vision was no vain deceit, but an heavenly revelation sent by God.

(3) When one asked concerning the great glory of Florentius, it was answered to him, “It was chiefly because of three virtues. First, that great love which he had toward God, referring to Him as the Final cause of all the good things which he had, and in all things seeking His Honour and good pleasure. Secondly, that zeal for souls which he had toward his neighbours, in that he sought the salvation of all, and eagerly led them to God’s service. Thirdly, because of his deep humility and contempt of himself, in that he always thought little and slightingly of himself.” These three things appear clearly and distinctly enough in his life, which is here written, and there are many of the faithful who are not ignorant thereof.

A LETTER AND CERTAIN NOTABLE SAYINGS OF FLORENTIUS

A Letter from Florentius to one of the Canons regular at Windesheim

(1) MY MOST BELOVED,

WHY dost thou trouble me thus? Are not mine own miseries enough for me? Yet overcome by weariness and yielding to thine importunity I am constrained to write to thee of matters that concern me not. Firstly, for all these necessities of thine I bid thee be thus importunate before God, in knocking continually at His door, and He shall straightway open to thee and give thee light far clearer than any man could give, although thou didst persist without ceasing in asking him questions, knocking at his door and making supplication to him, and he spent a whole lifetime in writing to thee.

Secondly, I urge thee above all things to submit thyself humbly to all men. It is expedient for thee to do this in thought, word and deed.

Continually remember, as the Blessed Bernard said to the Brothers on the Mount of God, that there is sunshine everywhere save in thy conscience, and a clear sky everywhere save in thy heart.

This humility doth come by constant use and by considering thine own worthlessness in both body and soul, not by dwelling upon the faults of other men or making excuses for thyself. Above all things be careful when thou dost reprove another, not to exalt thyself. The Blessed Jerome commenting upon St. Mark, saith, "The blind man who was restored to light by the Lord saw men as trees walking." In like manner (saith he) a sinner should think that all men are higher than himself. So do thou look upon all the Brothers as being trees for loftiness compared with thyself. In thy work take upon thee the baser and menial tasks, and from time to time think upon thine own vileness, or else meditate of death, punishment, judgement, or any other thing that may abase thee or kindle thy love for God and thy

neighbour. For the object of such meditation should be either to acquire this love, or to root out thy vices, or to attain virtue.

(2) Thirdly, as St. Bernard saith to the Brothers on the Mount of God, once daily compare to-day with yesterday, that thou mayest judge thy progress in virtue, or thy backsliding.

Learn to sit in judgement upon thyself once or twice every day, to set thy life in order, to regulate thy conduct, to accuse, condemn, or exact punishment from thyself. I counsel thee to keep to hand “The Mirror for Monks” or “The Mirror of Saint Bernard,” that thou mayest order thy doings thereby. The contents of this book thou shouldest repeat because in whatsoever thou art engaged these will readily suggest how thou shouldest behave thyself, and that wherein thy conduct hath been amiss. Likewise prevent all thy doings with meditation and brief prayer as to the manner in which thou shouldest act, and this will be easy to thee when by continued use thou canst repeat the contents of the book.

(3) Fourthly, early in the day and after the morning meal put before thine eyes thy evil habits, and the chiefest of thy vices, and also the virtues after which thou wouldest strive, and thus ever renew in thy heart the struggle with thy foes—the world, the flesh, and the devil; do this nothing doubting, for they that are with us are more than they that are against us. So wilt thou fulfil the precept of St. Bernard: “In the morning reckon with thyself for the night that is past, and take heed to thyself for the coming day how thou wouldest order thy!conduct throughout its course.” The same also saith: “For every hour write down the exercises thou shouldest perform therein. Spiritual exercises for the hours of prayer, bodily exercises for the hours of labour, so that at Vespers when thou dost reckon up thy several deeds if thou dost find any duty ill done, as to the manner, or the place, or time in which it was done, it may not go unpunished or unpaid.”

Seek the common good and keep thy heart ever lifted up.

Pray for me, my Brother, for I have always been negligent in this, and fare thee well.

Before the morning meal meditate upon our Lord’s Passion: afterward of death, judgement, and the pains of Hell: after supper think on thy vices and thy sins.

Certain notable Sayings of Master Florentius the Priest

(1) BEFORE all things know thy vices and thy passions.

Be watchful against temptation and the promptings of the passions. If thou dost feel these and instantly reject them they do not harm thee. If thou dost dally therewith it is evil; if in addition to such dalliance thou dost think with pleasure thereupon it is worse.

Reply humbly to them that ask of thee.

Avoid women, and beware of looking upon them. It is an ill example to the world to keep no guard over the eyes.

Tell thy sins with shame and sorrow, and a full intention to put them from thee, in the presence of God and thy confessor.

Tell thy faults one by one saying: "This have I done." Mark well in what thy fault doth lie, and tell this in simple words.

Thou oughtest not to speak evil of any, unless it can profit thee or him.

When thou dost accuse another be pitiful as to a weak Brother.

When thou doest nothing save that which accordeth with Holy Scripture, and understandest the same according to the interpretation of the Saints—not relying upon thine own interpretation—then is thy conscience good, and thy reason right.

It were good for a spiritually minded man to deal with his temporal concerns at an appointed time, and afterwards to return to his spiritual duties forgetting all else.

(2) I think that the thoughts and promptings which come into our hearts are not under our own control,—but it is in our power to plant good in the heart by reading, prayer, and meditation until these promptings to what is unlawful are overcome and yield, and by the grace of God do cease.

The pride of some is such that they must always rule over others, or else altogether fall away and return to the world—for they know not how to put themselves on an equality with others, nor how to submit.

Oftentime the whole body is affected by the passions which do rule a man, though he know not the cause of his emotion. There was one that in the summer could not sleep, nor eat well, and at first he could not discover the cause thereof, but he afterward found that it was through melancholy. Thus do our passions conceal themselves within us.

The weak should not judge the acts of their Superiors; for such judgements are often wrong.

Keep nothing secret, whether it be a material thing or a thought, but reveal all.

Speak seldom with a man of the world, but when thou dost, direct him to that which is good, according to his condition.

(3) Avoid worldlings, great folks and revellers. If thou art about any lowly or menial work before other men, revile it not; to do so showeth pride, as if such work were not meet for thee.

Learn to understand thy prayers, and thus wandering thoughts shall be driven away.

Loud singing doth disturb the brain and the senses, and doth put out devotion.

In praying thou oughtest to desire the grace and mercy of God rather than any great outward gifts—Mary thought herself unworthy of the salutation of the Angel, and being filled with the Holy Ghost went up into the hill country and ministered to Elizabeth. Any one that hath aught to say to a great king, would make to himself friends of them that are near to the king. So should one do in regard to Mary, who is in a special degree very near to God.

All things would become pleasant to one who should exercise himself well by meditating upon our Lord's Passion.

We ought to raise our heart to heaven without ceasing, and to return again and again to Holy Scripture, and to sigh that we are so carnal and sluggish in seeking the good that is eternal. By too great haste is devotion lost. Therefore avoid mere repetitions, and do all things with attention and thought, not from habit only.

(4) When thou art bidden to do something that is hurtful to the body remember that thy body is not thine own, but His to Whose obedience thou hast surrendered thyself.

In whatsoever degree a man hath given his goods, whether of the body or of the soul to the Community, in that same degree hath he part in the goods of the others.

Love equally in the Lord all who are converted; the absent alike with those that are present with thee. Avoid doing aught to which honour is attached, and aught of which thou mayest vainly boast, if it may be done equally well by another; and if anything may be so done by another or in some other place, love to have it so, and praise it more than if it were done by thee.

Be not envious that another is holier than thou, or hath higher fame, but love the gifts of God in him and they shall be thine own.

Nothing doth quench the sins of the flesh so well as earnest study; get the habit of remaining in thy cell and reading thy book; compel thyself to do so until it doth become pleasant to thee, and to go out seemeth a hardship, to come in a delight. Flee to thy cell as to a friend, for thou art safe therein.

Whensoever a man talketh with his fellows, he ought to strive to impress lowliness upon them.

Worldly knowledge is very alluring; therefore let a man beware that he be not too much attracted thereto; let him earnestly desire to pass over to God by means of such knowledge, and not be satisfied therewith as an end in itself.

(5) The devout and venerable Father often said to his friends and Brothers: “How good it is for you, and how stably do ye stand in that ye are able to live under obedience!” If he had known this before, he would not, he said, for anything in the world have begun by ruling over others unless he had himself first lived under obedience—and unless it were that bodily weakness hindered him he would wish still to be under some strict Master who would altogether break down his will.

Also if he were under obedience he would never be perplexed, for every man ought to put the burden of his doubt upon the back of another: he ought to humble himself beneath all who are converted, even beneath the young, for he knoweth not how much grace God may have given to them.

No one can ever attain true humility unless he is despised by others and is not regarded in anything. It were better to be trodden under foot than to consent to the praise of others.

When any of the Brothers doth ask counsel of thee, thou oughtest humbly to tell him the precepts thou hast read, for it is better always to follow the direction of others than thine own, unless thou seest that some better course is revealed to thee by the humility of thy questioner; but in such case never ascribe the revelation to thine own merits. If a man hath phantasies, then ought he to lift his voice in prayer.

(6) A man ought to direct all his exercises and studies to the conquest of his passions and weaknesses, for otherwise he doth profit little thereby.

In the hours of common labour stand ever on thy guard, and be careful of much speaking; think of that which thou hast read in thine hours of study.

There is no spiritual disease so great that it may not be cured by true obedience if a man hath wholly resigned himself he ought not to be more self-reliant, nor more despondent, than his Superior tells him to be. A man ought often, and day by day, to resign himself to God and his Superior; to bow the knees of his heart for pardon and to obey with his understanding. I am amazed that one who is under obedience can feel doubts in place of being content. When thou doest any good act be careful that thou do it wholly for God's sake, and that thou desire no other thing save His Honour and the edification of thy neighbour.

When thou art among the Brothers thou shouldest think: "Oh! that I might so behave that none should be offended through me!"

Thou shouldest seek the common good, for if thou dost begin by seeking thine own good in that which is least, thou wilt soon proceed to do so in greater things.

(7) Whatever is for the common good, this ought we to strive to guard with care, as for instance, the Holy Vessels of the Altar. The books of Holy Scripture should be guarded as the truest treasures of the Church. In writing we ought not to seek to show our own skill only, as for instance by writing a good hand, but also the good of all—e.g., that the books may be correct, well punctuated and clear, for one cannot study to advantage in bad or unfaithful copies.

Woe to him who living in a Community doth seek his own, or say that anything is his.

Woe to him who so living doth murmur about aught, or cause dissension in the Community: or trouble it in any manner.

(8) If we are one in will, in savour, and in custom in the Lord, then do we truly dwell together in unity.

Let every man study to conform himself to the Community in all his work and conduct; whether it be in reading, chanting, eating or fasting, let him not be singular. Nothing doth make a man so peaceful as the rule of never presuming to do anything of himself, but rather submitting altogether to the counsel of good men; and let a man always believe that it is more wholesome that such should consult for him.

Be earnest humbly to fulfil what is commanded thee, for if thou dost desire to question a command thou shalt hardly be truly obedient.

Seek devotion with all thy heart by diligent prayer. Wandering thoughts quench devotion as water quencheth fire.

Though thou art poor in virtue, and weak, thou oughtest not to be cast down thereby, but rather to humble thyself and think: "Since I have no great gifts I will make the little that I have an offering to God, as Mary offered a pair of turtle doves and not a lamb." He is truly a Brother and friend who doth hate the vices of another and help him to overcome them.

Thou oughtest always to strive to occupy thyself with some good thing, and to pay no heed at all to phantasies.

(9) It is very dangerous to converse often or associate with men of the world who have authority and dignity, as Councillors, Priests, Canons, and other wealthy men. The reason is that since one is naturally in awe of them he doth often applaud them, and give assent to their words.

Beware of much speaking, specially before worldlings, for a man seldom speaketh much without afterward repenting of some rash word.

Likewise abstain from jesting and loud laughter, for whatsoever men see thee to be outwardly, such do they judge thee to be inwardly, though thou art not really so.

Much study is of little profit unless it be directed to the amending of one's life and to ordering oneself diligently in right conduct, for the Devil knoweth many things about the Scripture and yet is his knowledge of no profit to Him.

If one is slow and sluggish in spirit in the morning, yet should he not be despondent, for God is able to give him the grace of devotion at whatever time it may please him.

Preface thy labour with some short prayer.

(10) The servant of Christ ought to speak briefly and in a low tone, and to be careful not to speak when 'tis not needful. If necessity compel, let him go apart to some private place that is open to him, and consider whether it is expedient to speak.

Thou oughtest always to strive to edify thy hearers by thy words, and to draw them nearer to the service of Christ: since nothing is more pleasing to God than labour for the conversion of souls.

Likewise we can do nothing more hurtful to Him than by making another to offend by our bad example, or loosing him from His service, for this is worse than to have crucified Christ in the flesh as did the Jews.

Before thou doest anything thou oughtest to strive for purity of heart, and to apply thyself to pious meditation, because from this doth spring Charity, prayer and devotion; and all the other virtues are strengthened thereby.

Never be idle, but be busied with some occupation, especially some holy one, directing all thy motives and thy work to the service of God.

(11) A portion of the Spirit is better than much knowledge without devotion: for to acquire the trick of beautiful language is easy, but to find the way to good works is hard.

Whatever a man may have done, let him know that he hath gained nothing if he doth not feel himself to be made thereby the humbler; when thou doest aught that is good, do it in simplicity and purity of mind to the honour of God, and seek not to advantage thyself in any way.

From heedlessness in word come troubles, offences, and slanders. Look therefore to what thou doest, why thou doest it, and in what manner.

That by which God is angered and thy neighbour offended is no slight matter.

Before thou dost begin any work, set before thee how thou wouldest behave thyself therein, and do not lightly break this rule.

Hasten to thy cell and thou shalt recover the devotion thou hast lost.

(12) When two or three converse together let each one see to it that their talking go not forward to what is profitless, but if this should happen thou oughtest to say charitably and humbly, but without shamefacedness, "Brother, it is not expedient for us to talk any more; let us go to our cell and do something better." The servant should strive, so far as in him lies, to turn his heart away from the creature and from all earthly longings; the more one doth progress in this, the more doth the desire for the love of God increase.

(13) If any would make good progress, let him study to do violence to himself, that is, let him strive to overcome his vices; for example, if he formerly desired lofty things he should now seek lowliness; and so forth in the case of other vices.

One that is truly obedient ought never to think slightly of a command, even though it may seem a small matter. When the Devil seeth us lowly and one in heart, then verily doth he flee from us, because he is the father of pride, and of discord.

We ought not to pay heed to our neighbour for his beauty or his wealth, but for that he is redeemed by the Blood of Christ.

The servant of God should strive to keep peace and concord with the Brothers; for this do the angels love more than aught else and this do they more gladly see in us, namely, that we are each and all peacemakers and one in heart.

(14) The servant of Christ should never feel safe, whatever good he may do, but be ever fearful about himself, lest perchance he may be found a reprobate before our Lord Jesus.

Before all things he should strive to think all other men holier and better than himself.

Devotion is nothing else than the desire of the soul toward God.

If a man earnestly endeavour to act humbly, however little he may follow our custom, yet shall it be counted to him for obedience. But if he neglect this and care not for it I fear that he shall be punished severely.

(15) One that doth desire to make progress in humility must often set before him hard and menial tasks, chide himself, judge and condemn, and in his secret thoughts ponder over his own worthlessness so as to be able patiently to bear contempt when humiliations come upon him.

When thou dost feel envy, or suspicion, or vainglory arising in thy heart, reply inwardly thereto and say: "Fie upon thee that thou art still so wretched and weak and that thou dost go forward less than other men, and dost become continually worse."

Thus humble and confound thyself inwardly and the temptations of the Devil shall flee from thee, for it is he that doth inspire these evil passions. We ought to expend great labour in striving against carnal things if we wish to conquer them.

We seldom or never eat but the Devil lieth in wait for us.

Wherefore let us ever watch and pray, because the Adversary never sleepeth, but doth assault us on every side.

LIVES OF THE FOLLOWERS OF FATHER FLORENTIUS

LIVES OF THE FOLLOWERS OF FATHER FLORENTIUS

PREFACE

The Elder Brother

ENABLED by the gift of God I have now in my account of these venerable fathers and illustrious men Master Gerard and Father Florentius described certain of their vertuous deeds, using that unpolished style to which the poverty of my genius doth compel me. It remaineth in the next place to set down as they come into my mind such memorials of their followers as may avail to instruct in humility the lives and characters of simple brethren.

These men followed Christ by the narrow way that leadeth unto life, manfully treading under foot the pomp of the world, and the softness of the flesh, so that they are not unworthy to be compared to the luminaries of heaven, for by their virtues they enlightened a vast multitude of faithful people whom they unceasingly exhorted to good deeds during their lifetime. Wherefore one may not keep silence as to their godly conversation in Christ, but must set forth their deeds, which are worthy of veneration, for the instruction of the little ones.

Novice

I earnestly entreat thee that in speaking of men so notable thou show me at least some few sparks of their devotion that I may be enkindled thereby to the love of virtue, seeing that I may set before me a new standard of life when I hear of the conduct of men of our own time. For many poets have written of the deeds of the heathen so as to profit their readers in this manner, and how much more oughtest thou for the consolation of the devout to set forth the example of these servants of God who have

triumphed over the world, so that the good may go forward continually to better things, and the sluggish be roused the more quickly from the slothfulness of the body.

The Elder Brother

If thou deignest to hear me I will tell thee somewhat that shall edify thee not a little at this present time. I will set before thee the lives of men who had not only the reputation of virtue but in addition to that reputation led lives illustrious by virtuous deeds. Yet now (fie upon it) there are some who having deserted their first enthusiasm, love to wander abroad, delight in vain talking, prefer their own wisdom to the primitive institutions of our Fathers, and to justify the satisfaction of their own desires, employ cunning arguments in place of obeying the Holy Law. Do thou above all things avoid this foolish presumption and follow the humble character and habit of those approved fathers who in our time were illustrious in Deventer under the rule of our reverend Father Florentius.

May grace be given me to set forth those things which tend to edification, that this present discourse may so instruct simple and humble brethren that all those who desire to follow Christ in the Devout Life may entirely lay aside care for this world, and study in the fervour of their devotion and their obedience to the law of holy simplicity to exhibit that same zeal which these devout and virtuous men exhibited in their earnest preaching.

LIFE OF JOHN GRONDE

CHAPTER I

Of the first Congregation of Clerks in Deventer

(1) THE righteousness of good men, as reason doth dictate, everywhere deserveth due praise. For those who lived lives worthy of praise ought not after their death to be given over to forgetfulness. The deeds of such should be held in remembrance if only for the consolation of them that survive; and should be set up as a pattern to other faithful people. Wherefore it behoves us above all to commend those who studied to serve God in humility and devotion in the House of our reverend Father Florentius from the time of the foundation of that House, and remained with all constancy under the rule of holy obedience with great fervency of Spirit unto their lives' end. Yet I do not purpose to write of the virtues of all of them, a thing which is by no means possible, but as concerning several of them I desire to record a few things that are within mine own knowledge.

(2) When I had come to study in Deventer, in the days of my youth, I sought the way to the Regulars at Windesheim, and having found there the Canons Regular, amongst whom was my brother, I was led by his advice to approach that most reverend man Master Florentius, who was Vicar of the Church of Deventer, a devout priest, whose most excellent fame had already reached the Upper Provinces, and had drawn my mind to love him: for a great multitude of scholars used to praise him for his conduct of holy things. Both his appearance and his words confirmed his righteous reputation, and he was in favour in the sight of all men, for indeed he was a true worshipper of God and most devoted in his reverence for our Holy Mother the Church.

When I came into the presence of the reverend Father he kept me for a while with him in his house, being moved thereto by fatherly affection; and he placed me in the School, and besides this gave me the books which he

thought I needed. Afterwards he obtained for me a lodging, at no cost to myself, with a certain honourable and devout matron, who often showed kindness to me and many other Clerks. So being associated with this man who was so holy, and with the Brothers of his Order, I had their devout lives daily in my mind and before my eyes, and I took pleasure and delight in the contemplation of their godly conduct, and in the gracious words which proceeded from the mouths of these humble men. Never before could I recollect to have seen such men, so devout and fervent were they in the love of God and of their neighbour. Living in the world they had no part in the life thereof, and seemed to take no heed to worldly business. Remaining at home they laboured carefully in copying books, being instant continually in sacred study and devout meditation. In the hours of labour they had recourse to ejaculatory prayer for their consolation; in the morning, having said Matins, they went to the Church, and during the Celebration of Mass they poured forth as an offering to God the first fruits of their mouth and the aspirations of their heart, and prostrating the body lifted up their pure hands and the eyes of their soul to Heaven, seeking by prayer and lamentation to reconcile God to them through the Saving Host.

(3) The first founder and the Spiritual ruler of this notable Community was Master Florentius, who was adorned with virtue and filled with Divine wisdom and understanding in his knowledge of Christ, because he, with his priests and clerks, humbly imitated the manner of the Apostolic life. These men, therefore, having one heart and mind in God brought every man what was his own into the common stock, and receiving simple food and clothing avoided taking thought for the morrow. Of their own will they devoted themselves to God and all busied themselves in obeying their Rector or his Vicar, and holding holy obedience as the highest rule, strove with all their strength to conquer self, to resist the passions, and to break down their own will, and besides this they sought earnestly to be gravely admonished for any acts of omission and neglect. For this reason there was in them much grace and true devotion: and they edified many by their words and example; likewise, by patiently abiding the mockery of the world, they led many to despise the same, and those who had formerly contemned them and considered their life—which was without honour—as a folly, afterward being converted to God, and having experienced the grace of devotion,

were compelled by their consciences to confess openly that these men were truly servants and friends of God.

(4) Many persons therefore, both men and women, despising worldly felicity, were converted to the Lord, and were instant to keep His commandments and to practise acts of mercy to the poor with Christian devotion, relying upon the counsels of the beloved Father Florentius. All the Brothers of his Order helped him, holding fast to the Word of Life, for they, like the luminaries of Heaven, gave light to a world growing old, dwelling in the midst of the turmoil thereof. Some who were priests and were learned in their knowledge of the Divine Law, preached earnestly in the Church, and by their preaching faithful people were wholesomely instructed to the practice of pious deeds and the hearing of holy discourses.

CHAPTER II

Concerning John Gronde

THERE was in those days at Deventer a devout priest, named John de Gronde, who was born in Octmesheim in Twent. This man, well known by repute, eloquent as a preacher and pre-eminent amongst the Clergy by reason of his character for chastity, was quietly content to serve the Altar as a simple Priest.

For a time he thus lived in the Province of Holland, but then the venerable Master Gerard Groote procured that he should be sent to help him, writing as follows to the priests who were then earnestly serving the Lord in Amsterdam, for he was joined to them by a special bond of love: "Be it known to you," said he, "that the township of Deventer standeth in urgent need of a good priest to assist the Religious by hearing confessions, for we have none such for our need. Wherefore, I pray you if there be no serious hindrance to the Holy Church in Amsterdam that our beloved John Gronde may be transferred to us from you, for doubtless he will be profitable to us; moreover his position here will be most suitable to him, since it was for this purpose only that he was ordained, namely, to succour those that are truly converted to the Lord, for this is the holiest of all tasks, and we shall receive him most joyfully and gladly."

(2) He came, therefore, to Deventer to Master Gerard, and being kindly received by him he lived a humble and devout life with the Community,

dwelling in the ancient House of Florentius with the Brothers who first formed that holy Congregation; and being fervent in spirit it was his wont to rouse the Brothers to prayer very early in the morning, saying, "Arise, watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation." He remained in the same house until the death of Master Gerard, after whose happy departure he went to the House of the Sisters, and dwelt in Gerard's cell. His solemn voice was often heard preaching the Word of God in the Church at Deventer, and Florentius was sometimes present, reverently hearing his preaching, listening intently and earnestly to the sweet and divine discourse which proceeded from his mouth, for his voice was sonorous, penetrating the ears of men and piercing their hearts.

(3) Sometimes also he went to Zwolle to comfort the devout Brothers and Sisters. During one season of Lent he often preached there, and once on Good Friday he expounded our Lord's Passion in a most earnest manner for above six hours, allowing a short interval in the middle of his sermon to restore the strength of his hearers. When of his brotherly love for them he sojourned at Zwolle, he heard confessions from some of the devout, giving wholesome remedies to the penitents, and persuading them to abide by their holy resolution, for many were found in that place who were eager to serve God, and happily their number has been increased until our own time. So anxiously was this devout preacher sought after, and so gladly was he heard, that even when he was in the Guest Chamber and was sitting at meat he would not deny the Word of Salvation to those who sought him, but while he was refreshing the body he also administered to them that were heartily contrite medicine to heal their souls of those sins which they had confessed to him. In so doing indeed he followed the example of Christ, who as He sat at meat graciously accepted the penitence of the most blessed Mary Magdalene; and when Simon thought wrongfully of the penitent confuted him, and directed him aright, giving a wise reason for the pious deed which she had done for Him.

(4) Also he went at times to the Brothers at Mount St. Agnes to hear their confessions, for they were at this time poor and had no priest, and he Said to them: "Let it not seem to you a hard thing to follow a God of humility, for by a little toil ye may gain His Kingdom."

After this he hastened to return to the place of his habitation, being unwilling to be separated for long from the beloved Brothers of Florentius,

for it was his only joy to live with them and they loved him with all their hearts. In garb he was simple and in diet temperate, he flattered not worldlings for gain's sake, but as a true preacher of the Gospel sought an usury of souls and to promote an increase of spiritual progress in these devout communities. Therefore, inasmuch as he was a faithful minister of the Lord and the day was at hand when he should be called to receive an everlasting recompense for his labours, he began to be grievously smitten with sickness.

(5) Thinking he should not live long he had himself carried to the House of Florentius desiring to make an end of his days in the midst of his Brethren; for he trusted that by their prayers and merits he would be greatly holpen at his last hour and faithfully defended from the snares of the enemy. And by the mercy of God so it came about, for the Most High had compassion upon him, so that he was comforted by the presence of Florentius and his Brethren, and at the bidding of the beloved Father made an end of his last words by saying: "In the Name of the Lord"; and thus he committed to Him the issue of his strife and breathed forth the breath of his life early in the morning about the fourth hour on the day after the Feast of St. John before the Latin gate, namely the 7th of May in the year of the Lord 1392. He was buried in the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary by the side of Master Gerard and in the same grave, where they both alike repose in peace. This was fitting, that as they had loved one another in life, so in death they should not be divided, but should be buried in the same Church, and beneath the same memorial stone, awaiting the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ to be raised up again by Him.

LIFE OF JOHN BRINCKERINCK

TO this wrestler in the cause of God there succeeded John Brinckerinck, a native of Zutphen, and formerly a loved disciple of Master Gerard. When the latter came and preached in divers places Brinckerinck often went with him and was his comrade upon the way, just as Luke accompanied Paul.

By this means he heard from Gerard many excellent things and learned of him, becoming a devout imitator of his deeds and a credible witness of his sanctity; for he came in and went forth with him, recited the Hours, and was careful in ministering to him in other pious acts of service. After Gerard's happy death, he lived humbly and devoutly under obedience to the reverend Father Florentius, being most zealous in striving to follow those good principles which he had imbibed with a thirsty heart from the preaching of Master Gerard. But by God's ordinance he was promoted to the Priesthood, and remained in the Community with the Brothers, labouring much in the establishment of the first House which Florentius founded until at last when John Gronde had died he was placed in charge of the Sisterhood. Being a man of power and a zealous lover of Chastity, he ruled the House that was committed to him with all strictness, not sparing himself toil, but often wearying himself beyond his strength in his efforts to gain souls. Sometimes he preached the Word of God in the Church, sternly reproving sin, and commending virtue in most excellent wise, as was seemly.

(2) Twice did I hear him preach upon our Lord's Passion on Good Friday, effectually enough and at some length. His first text was "God spared not His own Son," the second he took from the Psalm, "What shall I give unto the Lord for all the benefits that He hath bestowed upon me"!

The Devout heard him gladly, but some worldly men murmured against him because he took occasion to denounce their vices; yet he was not made fearful by reason of such men, for he loved to speak truth and to strive for justice, choosing rather to obey God and to be of profit to the good rather than to consent to evil men. Once, therefore, on the Feast of the

Circumcision he preached very eloquently and persuasively upon the Name of Jesus, exalting that sweet and blessed Name above all names that are in Heaven and Earth.

(3) At length his discourse proceeded to denounce certain worldly and foolish men on the ground that some, alas! named that Holy and Inviolable Name with too little reverence and often even in jest, and he cried, saying, “There are some who hearing this Sweet and Blessed Name Jesus say jestingly and in mockery,” “Aye, Jesus is the God of the Béguines.” “Oh! wretched men and fools, what do ye say? Who then is your God? Are ye worshippers of the devil that ye call Jesus the God of the Béguines? To you this is a great stumbling-block; but to them their great honour and their chief joy is this Holy Name of Jesus, Which they call upon continually and reverence deeply; and before all and above all the names of Saints they love and adore Jesus the Son of God, Whom ye mock and despise because these Brethren and Béguines rejoice to call upon His Name, devoutly praise It, saluting one another therein. Woe unto you! for that ye have the devil’s name upon your lips more often than that of Jesus because He seemeth to you to be too humble and despised!” In so saying he made them that loved Jesus to rejoice, and confounded them that mocked Him as they deserved.

(4) But when the number of the handmaids of God began to be increased, John, putting his trust in the help of the Most High, built a larger house for them to dwell in, that he might save more souls of them who fled to Christ from the turmoil of the world. At length by great labour he built a large convent for Devout women outside the city towards the north, in which he received certain Sisters from Gerard’s house, and caused them to be imbued with holy learning, and to be invested in the habit of Regulars under perpetual vows. These Sisters, and also those who remained in the city, he ruled strictly for the remaining twenty-six years of his life, the Lord helping him, but some he sent to other places to found new communities. In the beginning he found only sixteen Sisters living in the community, but at his death he left 150—for God multiplied their numbers in his days.

(5) The words which he spoke to a familiar friend bear witness that he thought humbly and fearfully of himself, though he wrought so good a work. While they were on the way together and were speaking of the future life, he said, “See, Brother, if the Angel of the Lord came to me now and said, ‘Bow thy neck, John, and suffer thy head to be cut off and thou shalt

be in purgatory', I would gladly submit that I might be assured of Salvation and thus be enabled to die in a state of Grace." At another time he said in his preaching: "How great and exalted is the priestly office, whose dignity scarce any mortal man can worthily support! If I could put off the garb of my priesthood as readily as I put it on I would straightway unfrock myself here. Let those who make a boast of their Holy Orders and pride themselves thereupon, not considering the obligations which they incur, give heed to these things and learn to think humbly of themselves, and to abase their hearts in the fear of God; for every man will be safer before God in the time to come in proportion as he is now the humbler in himself."

(6) This servant of God underwent many labours in his lifetime, and suffered scorn and reproach from the envious, but by patience he overcame them all, and giving the Glory to God he faithfully finished the good work he had begun. The more humbly he thought of himself the more pleasing was he to God and the more souls did he draw with him to the life of chastity, and so when he had laboured long enough and had produced much fruit in the vineyard of the Lord, which God's Right Hand had planted, the day grew on to eventide when he should receive the reward of his labours and cease from all earthly work, according to the Word of the Lord Who said, "Call the labourers and give them their hire"; for lo! he fell sick, being seized by a great and violent fever, and thinking that he was about to depart he sent word to the Prior of Windesheim that he was grievously sick and that the end of his days was at hand. And when the Prior came he explained his earnest wishes, committing the care of the Sisters to him as unto a faithful steward, that he might provide for them in the matter of a suitable Rector, lest their new-born zeal for obedience might perish through neglect or disuse.

(7) So the Festival of our Lord's Annunciation dawned and passed, and on the next day, i.e., March 26th, John, that faithful servant of Christ, panting for a heavenly country, gave up his soul to the God Whom from his youth he had striven to serve with the whole strength of his body. He died in the year of the Lord 1419, when that reverend Lord Frederick de Blanckenheim ruled over the diocese of Utrecht, a noble bishop and a pious and renowned patron of all devout persons. He was buried in the convent of the Sisters of the Order of Regulars at Diepenheim in the middle of the

choir before the High Altar which he had himself built and consecrated to the honour of the Blessed Virgin and St. Agnes.

Novice

I gratefully receive what thou sayest; happy is Deventer that she hath been adorned by such priests; but I pray thee pursue the way which thou hast now begun, and hide not from me those things which I have not yet heard.

The Elder Brother

The fervency of thy petition doth compel me to narrate certain other things which are unknown to thee. Yet how can a mind that is weighed down of its own evil tell anything in worthy wise about the virtues of men made perfect? But since for love's sake I have begun this task hear also what followeth. I will tell my story briefly, lest a lengthy discourse cause the reader weariness. Seek not any adornment of style in my words, but rather edification of character drawn from the lowly conversation of these Devout Brethren.

LIFE OF LUBERT BERNER

Concerning Lubert Berner

(1) AMONGST those who in earlier days gave light to the devout in Deventer there shone one Lubert the son of John Berner, a native of Zwolle. He was a priest whose character was truly humble and entirely obedient; that his life was earnest in Christ is known to me and to divers of the Brethren of Windesheim, Mount St. Agnes, and the Fountain of the Blessed Virgin near Arnheim, of whom many survive unto this present, but some are fallen asleep in the Lord.

What can I, poor creature that I am, say of so great a man as to whose life such a multitude of the devout bear witness? Nay, even men of the world, magistrates and councillors, as well as those who at that time were canons and vicars at Deventer knew him for a man of great virtue; that he was so may be proved by his many acts of humility, some of which I will bring forward here as examples, and as it were sweet smelling branches sprung from a good tree.

(2) When this Lubert was in the flower of his youth, and had learned the rudiments of the art of grammar, he went with some companions of his own age to the University of Prague, and soon having taken his Bachelor's degree returned to Zwolle, where his friends received him with great joy. Not long afterwards, attracted by the kindness of the Devout Brothers, his heart was softened by the inspiration of God to the amending of his life, and resolving to be the servant of Christ he retired from the world (but secretly, because his parents and friends were opposed to his design) and gladly exchanged worldly pursuits for spiritual warfare. He came to Deventer to Florentius, who was then in the full vigour of his holy life, and being received with fatherly love he learned wholly to renounce the pomps and cares of the world and to imitate the lowly life of Christ. He submitted himself beneath the yoke of obedience with the fervour of his whole heart, and was zealous in taking hold upon the discipline of the new life, and

offering himself daily as a living sacrifice to God he quickly rose to the highest perfection by breaking down his own will.

(3) But Berner, his father, who was a powerful Councillor at Zwolle, took it ill that his son had become a follower of Florentius, and turned to so owly a condition of life, so he sent several messengers to dissuade Lubert from his holy purpose, thinking that he was utterly astray in thus foolishly relinquishing his parents and worldly wealth. But Lubert being constant in mind stood unmoved, choosing rather to follow the counsel of Christ than to do the will of his earthly father, for God is greater than man, and hath bidden us to love Him above all things, saying: "He that loveth Father or Mother more than Me is not worthy of Me." Meanwhile it happened that his father fell sick, and his weakness was very heavy on him so that he could not even speak. Therefore Lubert was bidden to come quickly if he desired to see him alive; for through God's mercy the father in his utmost need was to receive the counsel of salvation through his son. So he went in haste to his father's house, to further the salvation of his soul, being filled with filial sympathy for his sickness and remembering the commandment of the Lord rather than the injury which had been done formerly to himself.

(4) So he who had lately fled before his father's persecution now visited him safely when he was sick, and spoke gently to him whose opposition he had lately endured; but the father, looking upon his beloved son, was greatly rejoiced at the sight of him, and wonderful to say, though he had been dumb and unable to open his mouth, he now for joy began to speak.

Forthwith he sought pardon from Lubert and begged him of his mercy to forgive him for that he had once sought to hinder him from walking in the way of God. And Lubert overflowing with love gladly forgave him all. So the father being reconciled unto his son now followed more wholesome counsels, and not wishing Lubert to be defrauded of his patrimony, ordered all those things to be given him which fell to him by the right of succession. These things he set in order during his lifetime that after his death he might find mercy from God and be effectually assisted by his son's prayers. A few days afterwards he died, and Lubert, remembering his kindness, poured forth fervent prayers with many tears for him, and he did not take the portion which fell to him to be expended upon his own desires but delivered it all into the hands of Florentius to be spent in the pious service of the Brotherhood.

Florentius did not keep the goods entrusted to him for his own use but laid them out in the building of the House and in paying the expenses thereof. This is that Monastery of Florentius, which is distinguished by being called after his name and by the favour of the Councillors of the State was founded for a Community of Religious Clerks in the year 1391.

(5) In the same year Lubert and his friend Henry Brune, who was a devout man, were ordained to the priesthood. These two were as twin brethren, having been nurtured in that House with the milk of holy devotion, and being adorned alike with great virtues were thought worthy of the honour of the Priesthood. Both were men who were well born as the world judgeth, and as God judgeth pre-eminent for their devotion, humble, sober, chaste, kindly, earnest, zealous, loving, docile, simple, and obedient.

(6) Now with regard to Lubert when he had become a priest, I will endeavour to describe certain acts of his to serve for examples, and these I myself witnessed and have often heard of from the Brothers. Once he was sitting in his cell and writing when Florentius sent to summon him, and as soon as Lubert received the message he laid down his pen and rose from his seat. Now he had reached the last line of the page and there were perhaps three or four words remaining to be written; so the Brother who was sent with the message said to him: "Write that last line and then the page will be finished—thou hast time to do so before thou goest." But Lubert in the true spirit of obedience, replied: "I must write no more, but obey instantly." Verily he was another Mark, and worthy to be rewarded with him of whom it is written in the lives of the Fathers that when summoned by his Abbot he would not even finish a letter which he had begun. When his business with Florentius was done Lubert returned to finish his work filled with the joy of a good conscience as the fruit of his obedience. Then the other Brother told in order all that had happened to Florentius, who hearing of the prompt obedience of Lubert, praised him thus, saying: "Lubert, Lubert, how well thou knowest what is for thy profit and thy spiritual progress." So diligent was he in writing that when anyone spoke to him he continued his task while making a fitting reply.

(7) At another time a scholar who wished to write a letter to his parents was doing so by Lubert's advice in his cell, and I was present with them. Then Florentius came in and said: "What do ye?" and Lubert answered with respect, "My companion is writing a letter to his parents," to which that

most kindly Father replied: "Write on, that thy name may be written down for Life Eternal." The young man aforesaid afterward became a devout Religious. Neither do I forget the words of my Father Florentius which he spoke in Lubert's cell, for a good man out of the good treasure of his heart ever bringeth forth good things. Florentius was instant to speak that which should tend to edification, and Lubert his disciple strove not to neglect aught which might fall from his master's mouth, but to fulfil his commands without hesitation.

(8) One of the Devout asked leave of Florentius to visit his friends and relations, and as his request was urgent Florentius gave him permission, not wishing to make him sad. When he returned from his journey, having met with many perils on the way, he came to Lubert, the servant of Christ, and said: "I wonder that Father Florentius so readily gave me leave to revisit mine own country, since so many dangers meet a man in the world," and Lubert answered: "If Father Florentius had known that thou wert strong enough and able to submit thy whole will to his good pleasure he would have spoken otherwise to thee. But he condescended to thy petition and desire from love of thee, lest of thine own motion thou shouldst venture upon something even worse. The blame therefore resteth with thee and not with him for his consent." Then that other replied: "It is good for me to know this, and for the future I will look to it more carefully that I do what I am told, following the counsel of him that hath the governance of me;" for he acts foolishly who doth follow his own desires against the good pleasure of his superior, as is shown in this instance, and the experience of many doth bear a like testimony.

Novice

(9) I gladly hear of these patterns of holy obedience; God grant that being taught by this example I may for the future beware of being satisfied with mine own judgement, and may always incline myself to obey my Superior. But besides these things I would hear somewhat of the humility of this devout man, for if he had not been humble he would not have obeyed so quickly.

The Elder Brother

(10) It is fitting that I should tell thee somewhat of this matter, for to consent to one who for a pious purpose doth make such a request, doth tend to edification and doth gain favour in no small measure with the Almighty.

This Lubert of happy memory was indeed humble, humble in heart, in garb, in deed, and in word, as the following instances shall show. He was wont to praise the virtues of others somewhat highly, to think himself of less account than any, and to speak with the poor and simple rather than with the rich. Wherefore when a certain Clerk came and asked him to give him some good counsel for the amending of his life, Lubert replied: "Good Brother, what can I, a slothful and profitless man, say to thee! Go to that Brother yonder, and he shall instruct thee better. For I am like a vessel made to dishonour which may never be washed clean, but must ever send forth a foul savour."

The Brother hearing this went away much edified and said to his companions: "How humble a man is Lubert!"

(11) There were two Clerks talking to one another of Lubert, and one of them said: "I think that he weareth too austere an aspect; gladly would I speak to him sometimes but I dare not;" to which the other answered: "If it seem good to thee I will tell him of it and perchance he may amend himself." The Clerk therefore came to Lubert, and said: "I would fain have some talk with thee," and Lubert said, "Say on." Then that other said to him: "Some are offended in thee because thou dost walk with such austerity, and dost look sourly upon them, wherefore they dare not to approach thee and speak with thee. I pray thee be more complaisant and kindly affectionate in thy manner of speech that they may come freely to thee." Then the humble Lubert answered: "Most gladly will I amend myself through the Grace of God, and I thank thee that thou hast admonished me." From that hour he was as it were another man, and he looked more cheerfully upon those who approached him, though he maintained a due and proper gravity.

(12) Once when the Brothers were gathered together, Florentius questioned them concerning a certain matter in the Holy Scriptures, and as the others were silent, Lubert, because he was the eldest amongst them, began to speak. But Florentius, who wished to humble him before them and to prove his spirit, said, with a grave air: "Thinkest thou that we are ignorant of what thou sayest we who are Bachelors and Masters in Arts?" and Lubert humbly replied: "I was presumptuous;" for this was his wont when he was reprov'd for any small fault, that he did not excuse himself, but rather confessed himself to be blameworthy, saying; "I was in fault," or

“negligent,” or “careless,” or “foolish,” or “stupid,” or “idle,” or something of the like nature; confessions which proclaimed his own humility and edified the Brothers.

(13) When he read aloud during meal time he would make mistakes of set purpose that he might be corrected by the Brother whose duty it was to do so, and sometimes he pretended not to have heard that he might be corrected yet more fully, for he desired to be put to confusion and to be held a dullard for not being able to read better. But Gerard of Zutphen, whose duty it was to correct such errors at meal-time, perceiving that his mistakes arose not through ignorance only but through his virtue of humility, abstained from correcting him a second time. He had a manly voice as of a trumpet, and read in very seemly wise.

(14) One of the Brothers asked Florentius this question: “Why dost thou not reprove me and chasten me as thou dost Lubert and John Ketel our cook? Would it not be good for me that thou shouldest sometimes so chasten and reproach me?” But the good Father, filled with the virtue of sound judgement, answered: “If I knew that thou wert as strong for all good as they I would prove thee in like manner: but these two are of such a character that through reproof they go forward yet further and do not murmur against it, but become thereby yet more humble and fervent in spirit. For they rejoice in being despised and in bearing blame beyond all others.” The beloved Father would often reproach them to their faces before the other Brothers, for although he admonished them severely so as to set an example to the rest, yet he deeply loved them, as he showed particularly by the many tears he shed at the time of their death.

(15) So to this Lubert as a good and wise man, virtue was truly of a pleasant savour, and the passions and concupiscence of the flesh were things to shudder at, for he strove to overcome the frowardness of his nature, and in like manner he stirred up others to fight manfully against their sins.

(16) Once when he was speaking devoutly and earnestly with certain of the Brothers about conquering the passions, they communed together almost until the middle of the night. Their hearts were so kindled with the love of God and the desire to amend their lives that they forgot themselves and did not perceive the mist of sleep but put away heaviness from them, being aroused to new devotion by their ardent conversation about the Word

of God; for they proved by their own experience the truth of that verse of the Psalmist: “Thy word doth burn vehemently and thy servant loveth it.”

By thus communing together of holy things, Lubert and those who were summoned with him to advance in the Spiritual Life were greatly inflamed, so that afterward he would say joyfully and longingly repeat to the Brothers who were his comrades in arms: “When! oh! when can we set ourselves aflame once more!”

Novice

(17) By telling me this thou dost excite my admiration. Would that I could hear continually of such matters which should pierce my heart to my healing, and enkindle me. Would that no vain talking might interpose to defile my conscience! But I pray set forth some other examples from the life of this noble priest to teach me to avoid scurrilous talk, for I confess that it is no small joy to hear of their devout communing.

The Elder Brother

(18) Our Saviour Jesus Christ saith: “He that is of God heareth God’s word,” and since thou dost rejoice to hear and read the things that are of good report concerning the servants of God, I hope this cometh of Divine grace, which thou oughtest to guard with all diligence, and to incline thine heart continually to humility and virtue, which things were deeply rooted in Lubert. Once when he was standing near the kitchen grinding mustard, some of his friends from Zwolle came desiring to visit him; and when he saw them he was moved to speak to them lest perchance they might be offended if they were baulked of their desire to talk with him—for they were honourable men and had been appointed to the Magistracy. So the humble Lubert, just as he was, girt with his apron, approached and saluted his friends lovingly, not being ashamed to appear before them in the dress of a servant, but rather striving to please God by discharging a humble office. After talking with them for a short while he bade them farewell and returned to the task imposed upon him, and his friends went away much edified by his humility.

(19) At another time, when he was at Zwolle, some friends were walking with him and they were handsomely clad, but he was dressed plainly in his long habit as a simple Brother should be. And some who saw this said admiringly: “See how he goeth like a lamb in the midst of wolves.” Thus to compare them was fitting, for their lives were utterly diverse. Once, in

summer time, he was given a plain gray hood, old and faded, and Brother Amilius, who was very friendly with him and loved him well, said, to prove him: “Lubert, what manner of hood is that which thou hast? it doth become thee ill enough, for it doth hang about thy neck as if thou wert in a consumption.” And Lubert replied cheerfully: “My Brother, what art thou saying? feel it and see how good the cloth is, and do not speak evil of it for I am not worthy to wear it.” So Amilius hearing this was edified by his words.

(20) Amilius also told me the things following, concerning Lubert, saying: “He was so humble, and mortified his own will so much, that he would submit even to a little child, and obey the least of the Brothers in the House as gladly as he obeyed Florentius himself, if the latter placed such an one in charge of the House.” He was of none account and an outcast in his own eyes, so he thought the more highly of others, especially those who served the Brothers in the kitchen. He used to say: “John Kettel and his companion go far beyond us in virtue, and they will yet become our superiors, for they put us to shame for our lukewarmness and themselves do their work with all zeal. They seem to be our servants but in very truth they are our Lords and Masters in the Way of God.” It was out of the humility of his heart that he said this and so instructed himself and others in most excellent wise. He had a good knowledge of writing and rejoiced to exercise this art, for he shunned sloth and was instant and diligent in the labour of his hands, and in inducing others to write.

(21) Once when a boy asked him to set a copy he consented kindly, and did it, saying: “Thou wilt learn to be a good writer, for thou hast long and pliant fingers”: and by the co-operation of God this prophecy was fulfilled. He wrote in round hand these words as a copy and as a good motto: “Take my yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly of heart. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

These words had the savour of true wisdom to him, wherefore he put aside the sayings of the philosophers and exhorted his pupil to follow the humility of Christ which leadeth a man to true wisdom and to the attainment of everlasting felicity. When therefore this humble and devout priest Lubert, surnamed ten Bosche, who is famed for his many virtues, was about to depart from this present world, he earnestly besought the Brothers to remember him in their prayers after his death by saying sometimes the

prayer for the departed, especially at the time when they were writing in their cells.

(22) When the deadly plague was raging grievously in Deventer and the neighbouring places, and had taken away several of the Devout besides others from this life, and had (as one may piously believe) given them part in Eternal Light in Heaven, it so fell out that Lubert also was seized with the said plague. In the month of July, three days before the Feast of the Blessed Mary Magdalene, he began to be sick and to keep his bed, saying that he should not abide here long. The Brothers laboured on his behalf with many prayers and sought means of healing him from God, and from skilful surgeons, for all desired that he might live. But his prayer ascending to the ears of Those that dwell in Heaven availed more than the longing of the Brothers, so when one of them said: "We shall not long be separated but shall soon hold commune again in Florentius' cell," he replied: "Never again in this world, but in Heaven and with the Saints," for he desired to be released and to be with Christ. So on the Feast of the Blessed Mary Magdalene he bade them sing in his presence the sequence "Laus tibi Christe," and when they had sung it he said: "What devout and fervent words are those"; and he repeated this verse to himself meditatively: "What should the sick soul do if she had received no help, and if there were no physician there?" Many devout persons who were present hearing this wept, but he being joyful in the Lord consoled their grief.

(23) Brother Amilius, who was assiduous in ministering to him, carefully kept account of all the edifying words which he heard fall from his lips; and after Lubert's death he faithfully made record of them, writing them in order in a letter which he sent to the Brothers who were absent; and this letter I have determined to insert here as a pious memorial of Lubert that thereby his happy death, and the last moments of his life maybe more fully known. When about eight days had elapsed since the beginning of his sickness and he grew no better, at length wearied by his many sufferings he reached his last hour, and filled with divine comfort he fell asleep in the Lord joyfully and happily, surrounded by the Brothers, who kept watch over his death-bed with earnest prayers. He died on the twenty-sixth of July, the day following the Feast of St. James the Apostle, in the year of our Lord's Incarnation, 1398, during the reign of Pope Boniface the Ninth. His body was reverently buried in the churchyard of St. Lebuin, near that of his

companion John Ketel—that devout servant of Christ—toward the southern side of the church. There several other Brothers, who died as time went on, were buried near him, and there they rest in peace.

An account of Lubert's happy death written by the beloved Brother Amilius

(24) In the Name of the Lord Amen. In the year 1398, after our Lord's Nativity, and on July the nineteenth, Lubert ten Bosche—that is Lubert of the Wood or Forest—an humble priest, and a man of great devotion, was seized with the plague. The first two or three days after his seizure he spent upon his bed in sleep or stupor without consciousness, as usually occurs in this disease, and during this time he became so weak as to seem very near to death. Afterwards, however, he grew easier and seemed to those who stood by to be like to get better; but he so bore himself as one that had a certain knowledge that he should die, for to some he offered consolation and said farewell to others. Likewise he dictated several letters to his familiar friends who were Priests and Religious scattered about in divers places, praying them that, since he was passing to Purgatory and the place of suffering, they would help him with their Masses, watchings and prayers. Then he desired that the Brothers of our House might be assembled, saying that he thought it profitable and fitting that he should make his peace with those with whom he had lived during so many years, and should ask their pardon and forgiveness, and so depart. So when they were gathered together he stood near, leaning upon the staff which supported him, and began thus:

"I have dwelt for so many years in the House of Florentius and yet have amended my life too little, nor have I made that progress in virtue which I set before me when I came hither. My whole intent and resolution was willingly to give myself to all humiliation, obedience, lowliness, charity, and the other virtues, and to submit to Florentius and all the Brothers; but I have not so done as—now that I am about to die—I should rejoice to have done. Nay! I have often been a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence to you by my pride;" and here he mentioned various other sins of which in his humility he accused himself.

(25) Then, weak as he was, he most humbly prostrated himself upon the earth, and with much humility and tears besought pardon from them all. Who could be so hard of heart as to refrain from tears to see so great a man, a Father and Brother so loving, thus prostrate on the ground and weeping!

Then rising and leaning upon his staff he began once more to address the Brothers, exhorting them faithfully and lovingly to keep their unity and charity to one another, and to strive continually to submit themselves, and to be subject one to the other in that obedience that is of love; and he urged each one to strive to be the least of all and the servant of all, to be faithful guardians to one another, admonishing one another in charity, correcting one another for sin and evil manners in brotherly love, not passing over or approving any sin either of commission or omission; so should they attain true unity and charity by the rooting out of sin. He added, "If ye thus remain at unity, and thus act, ye shall have nought to fear from any man, and shall be like to a fenced city which may not be taken, otherwise your affairs shall quickly come to nought, and all your strivings shall be nothing accounted of, but become as it were vanity and foolishness." After this he humbly besought the Brothers to pray for him in faith, and to remember him in all their prayers as he had confidence therein but particularly in those supplications wherein they exercised themselves during the daily labour of their hands; and so saying farewell to the Brothers he let them go. On the second day he dictated a letter in the following terms to be sent to Florentius and the other Brothers who were absent.

The letter of the devout and humble Lubert to Florentius

(26) Peace of mind and every good thing be with thee; Most beloved Father, I believe that our dear Brother Amilius hath written to thee concerning my sickness, yet I write to inform thee further that from the Friday when I fell sick until the following Tuesday I lay in stupor and unconscious, unable to turn myself upon my bed; but now since the Lord hath of His goodness rekindled my poor intelligence in some measure I cannot depart in peace out of this misery without once more at least—and for the last time in this life—prostrating myself at thy feet and unfolding to thee as to my father my sufferings and the endless pressure of necessity which doth particularly beset me. For now I must be brought before the dreadful Judgement Seat of God, in the presence of His Angels and of them that are our especial Advocates, confounded by those sins for the amendment of which thou hast often instructed me. But I, alas! did not think of those sins as thou didst judge them, nor perceive how grievous and terrible they are. Oh! Father Florentius, I cannot before the Judgement Seat of God deny what thine own hand hath written to me concerning my

passions, yet in some measure it was I myself who by many importunate prayers constrained thee to write. This document I have entrusted to our beloved Amilius to be laid before thee, that considering these and my other offences thou mayest think the more pitifully of the sufferings I must undergo in that place of dread, that place of direful pains, and mayest succour me by thy prayers, of which I stand in urgent need.

Most beloved Father, if I were in thy presence I would entreat thee with tears to grant me true and fatherly pardon for other offences, and especially my disobedience, lest I be condemned yet more dreadfully for these sins, and I doubt not that thou wouldest freely pardon me.

(27) Now I will speak to you, most beloved Brothers, for by your life and conversation ye have often recalled me from my lukewarmness and sloth to the amending of my life, and often have most lovingly admonished me for my passions; but—as ye know—I, wretched man that I am! have not amended as much as I might and ought to have done, nor could your words pierce the hardness of my heart which would have been for my good, for I knew not nor foresaw that as I had so lived in this life, I must therefore be taken suddenly to the place of dreadful pains, where are gnawing serpents, fierce lions, ravening wolves, and countless monstrous devils. If I can repay you for all your exhortations and good example I will never be backward in so doing; but this I cannot do, for whatever small progress I may have made in this life I have made it by the help of God and of you, and I ascribe it not to myself. And now for all my sins of neglect I prostrate myself before your feet with heart and lips accusing myself before God and you, and praying for pardon for every one of them.

Likewise I beseech you that ye see to it that the day of my death be announced to those persons whom ye see fit to tell, though I know that ye will not fail in this, and that ye cause the Holy Office to be said and Vigil to be kept, with such other observances as may seem good to you. Farewell! Farewell! and again Farewell for ever! all ye whom in this life I shall see no more.

(28) Having dictated this letter on the Vigil of St. James the Apostle he sat down to read it again if perchance there might be aught that he wished to add or remove from it, but suddenly there came upon him such trembling and weakness that all his strength went from him, so they that stood by took him back and laid him again upon his bed. Soon afterward he began to be

so shaken with violent pain and distress that he cried aloud with a lamentable and pitiful voice and asked that the Brothers of the House and other devout persons from without should be called together to succour him with their prayers. And when they were so called his breast began to quake and his whole body trembled and was violently shaken, he grew pale and sweated; and his eyes were distorted in dreadful wise, he groaned and gnashed with his teeth, uttering moans of distress and other pitiable sounds. Meantime the Devout ran together and with many tears prayed earnestly for him, and he, beholding them, also wept some little space.

(29) Then he signed to me, Amilius, for I was continually with him, to take away the taper which we had placed in his hand supposing him to be at the point to die, and to read the Seven Psalms with him, for he thought that he should not die yet. So he began reading one verse with me while the other Brothers responded with the remainder, and thus he continued to the end with great fervour and devotion: and when the Psalms were ended he said “Let us abide under the protection of Holy Mary,” so he began the “Salve Regina” and the proper collects, and this Antiphon he repeated again and again with great love and devotion; saying the Collect and often changing the words, led thereto by these emotions. From time to time the power of speech failed him, but he continually began again the same Antiphon that the others might repeat it throughout. When this had continued for a time he bade me tell the Brothers to pray silently and with heartfelt compunction for him, and then he lay for a long time speechless and as it would seem in great pain and distress. But the Devout and the Brothers remained with him all day in prayer looking for his death from hour to hour. Having lain thus for a long time he called me, saying, “Brother Amilius, the power of speech hath been restored to me. Therefore tell the Brothers and all the Devout every one of them to recite the Psalter for me, and at the beginning and end of every Psalm to say one ‘Ave Maria’ on bended knees.” Afterward he said, “Tell them that I care not for a great number of Psalms, let them wait awhile between the several Psalms in meditation and pray the Lord for me with heartfelt compunction lest their minds be confused by the number of Psalms which they recite.” When I had told them this he bade me ask all that were gathered together to pray for him, saying the Seven Psalms, the Hours of Our Lady, and of the Holy Spirit, and anything else they could repeat, continuing constantly in prayer

with him, and so to abide until his death; and when I had given them this direction he added: “Brother, I fear that I am laying a heavy burden upon our Brothers and Sisters, but necessity doth constrain me, for I cannot trust at all in myself, but lean greatly upon the prayers of the Devout. How seemeth it to you?” And I comforted him, bidding him be of good cheer, for they would most gladly do this for him. Then from the hour of Vespers or thereabouts until the eighth hour he lay speechless in a great fever and then began to speak again and became quite peaceful.

(30) After a while he called me to him and told me how he had fared during the day; at first he said he had suffered great and wonderful temptations, for there had come to him an evil spirit in the form of our Brother John Ketel which strove with many devices to deceive him. This spirit told him many marvellous things about the Glory of Heaven and divers subtle and high matters, many of which were true and conformable to the Scriptures, but therewith it mingled many things that were false. It also told him many marvels which he could not explain for its manner of speech was, he said, that of a spirit, and it seemed to be conjoined to his own soul so that it was as it were talking with himself and his own soul answered him. “It was,” said he, “very displeasing to this Spirit that I spoke to you from time to time,” for when I would do so the Spirit said to me, “Speak not to the flesh, speak not to the flesh.” It was also much displeased that I had procured so many prayers to be offered up by the Devout, and that I had such confidence therein. And when I asked you to read the Psalms the Spirit said within me, “Dross, Dross! why putteth thou thy trust in these Psalms? or in Mary, Gregory, Jerome, and the like? Thou oughtest to put thy trust in God; He is angry with thee that thou trustest in these rather than in Him only—yet because thou art fainthearted and fearful, and hast not done this of malice, He is merciful to thee; but take heed that thou do this no more. I, John Ketel, did not thus, yet have I reached the Kingdom of Heaven without passing through Purgatory:” and when I asked why this was so he gave the two following reasons.

(31) The first was that he had renounced all temporal goods and riches altogether, for the sake of God and the Salvation of his own soul, and had given himself to so lowly a station in life (i.e. the work of the kitchen), and had never repented of this renunciation. The second reason was that he had eagerly and zealously persevered in such work without any desire to return

to his former state; and also because he had shown a firm resolution and great zeal to abide until his death in a condition so humble and in an office so lowly (for this he did that he might be the servant of all), and had in fact continued until his death in that office as he had resolved. Then Lubert said to me: “Brother, I know that what the evil spirit told me of our trusty and beloved Brother John Ketel was true, but whether or no he hath come to the Kingdom of Heaven without passing through Purgatory I know not.” That evil spirit told me (added he) that I also should escape Purgatory and pass to the Kingdom of Heaven, and when I asked the cause hereof, it said: “Thou art a martyr in the sight of God, because thou hast laid down thy life for thy Brethren and Sisters in that of thy love and charity thou hast chosen to remain with them in so great danger of death.” Then the humble Lubert said to me: “Whether I shall go to Heaven, escaping Purgatory, I know not, though I cannot deny that I abode with my Brethren out of love and charity to them; yet it is enough that the spirit strove with many words to induce me to trust in mine own merits and virtue; yet I have been ever fearful and have never trusted in myself, nor do I now so trust—all my confidence and hope is in the mercy of God, in the intercessions and merits of the glorious Virgin and the other Saints, and in the prayers of the Devout, wherefore I do rejoice and am glad that many holy psalms and prayers have been said. Sometimes the spirit took away from me all my senses save that of hearing, and this too he strove to take away, but was not able.”

Besides this Lubert told me of many marvellous things which the Devil had said to him, of which some were heretical and contrary to the Faith, and to these strove to persuade Lubert to assent, but he mingled with his lies some things that are true. “By these proofs I know,” said Lubert, “that it was a wicked spirit which was trying to deceive me, because it ever mingled falsehood and lies with the truth. It doth appear to me, therefore, that it is profitable and necessary for one who is dying to have some man of understanding—like my Brothers—at his side until his departure.” These things he told me on the Vigil of St. James the Apostle after the eighth hour in the evening.

(32) After this, weak as he was, he continued in great tranquillity and peace of heart until his death, for he earnestly desired to be released and to be with Christ, having a sure confidence and hope in the coming of our Lord Jesus, the glorious Virgin Mary and the other Saints. In this ardent

longing he continued until the day after the Feast of St. James, sighing and pondering over the Holy Psalms, especially the Psalm of “Blessed are they that are undefiled in the way.” He often asked how near he was to death, whether he showed the signs thereof, whether his short breathing did not portend death, and so forth: and we could give him no better comfort than to tell him the end was near at hand.

(33) Sometimes he cried out, but with great trustfulness: “O when will the Lord Jesus and Holy Mary with the Holy Angels come to release me? I trust that they will not delay their coming. Would that they might deign to come quickly and to make an end! I hope that I shall not long abide here,” and so forth. Very often he evoked Holy Mary, Jerome, and Gregory (for to these he was especially devoted) and other Saints to pray for him, to be present with him, and succour him in the hour of death. He besought us also to speak a few words to him from time to time and urge him to prayer and to the Invocation of Saints; but for the rest to pray for him in silence, with sighing and tears, and to await his death with him, having our hearts repentant toward the Lord. Thus he came to his last hour, so fervent, so devoted, so ardently desiring to be released, so lovingly and confidently awaiting the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Virgin Mary, the Holy Angels, and the other saints—nor, as it would seem, was he balked of his desire.

(34) By this time he was already dead and quite cold in all his other members, and life seemed to flutter only in his tongue and breast, for there was scarce one of his limbs that he could move; but suddenly, without help from any one, he raised himself up by his own motion and clasped his hands and lifted them upward, keeping his eyes fixed upon the wall, toward which he most reverently bowed his head with all devotion, and he lifted up his hoarse and broken voice, and cried with all the strength he had: “Of Thy Glory, Thy goodness, Thy mercy, receive, oh! receive me! Of Thy Glory, Thy Glory, Thy goodness, Thy goodness, of Thy mercy, receive me, receive me, oh! receive me.” While he sat upright he repeated these words again and again, and at length laid him down upon his bed, but twice afterward he raised himself again with the same motions and gestures, and repeated the same words. And again he sank back and lay seemingly in a deep stupor and amazement, but I asked him, saying: “Brother Lubert, what is it?” “How is it with thee?” and he answered me, as it were in great amazement:

“Wonderful, wonderful, marvellous, marvellous, yea, great and marvellous are the things which I saw when I sat up;” and then he added, “Call the Brothers, call the Brothers,” and, when I called them, immediately he breathed his last, after a short struggle, and fell asleep happily in the Lord, full of virtue and good works, for whom Blessed be God! for ever and ever, Amen.

From a letter of Florentius in praise of Lubert

(35) Who that knew our beloved Brother Lubert would not grieve for his death? who that loved him would not weep? who would not mourn and lament for our House if he diligently considered what ruin and calamity that death doth threaten thereto? What an example of humility, what a pattern of devotion to the Community was taken from us when he died! Is any one of us who survive so fervent in all the exercises of devotion and contempt for the world? doth any promote the common good as did Lubert? is any consumed by godly zeal for our House as he was? Is there any that doth so esteem himself as worthless, lacking in wisdom, insufficient? a pattern of all these virtues hath been taken from us by his death; for this cause it is just that he who loveth our House should mourn piously for him; for this cause he doth weep that is solicitous for our progress in spiritual things, and our grief doth bear proportion to the love we felt for him, for the more closely our hearts were knitted to him the more bitterly do they feel this severance. Verily our heart and soul were at one in the Lord with our most beloved Brother: judge ye therefore from that unity what the pain of severance is, and take the measure of our sadness by the abundance of our love. But if ye desire a brief and clear proof of the measure of that sadness and that pain which were so heavy and so grievous that we could scarce read two or three lines of your letter, or write two or three in reply thereto without shedding tears in such abundance as to hinder us from continuing; if, I say, ye would know the measure of our grief and sadness search the depths of your own hearts, all ye who loved Lubert even as we loved him!

Certain excerpts taken from the devout exercises of Lubert

(36) Thy task shall be to labour to uproot thy vices, and to gain virtue; but unless thou dost resign thyself to God simply and with all thy heart, committing all else to him, it will rather engender presumption in thee, making thee hard of heart, doubtful, restless and cowardly. Labour therefore with modesty, quietness and fear, but resign and commit the issue to God

that He may do according as He will. Be not sad nor downcast if thou art not able to fulfil thy purpose, for it may be that God doth will it so lest thou shouldest trust in thine own virtue.

When thou prayest have no thought save of God and thy Psalmody, considering that He seeth thee. Give up thy will freely and wholly to Him, and utterly put aside, so far as thou art able, all unnecessary and empty thoughts. Strive so to behave thyself as if thou wert standing alone in the Presence of God, the Blessed Virgin and all the Saints; to Them show thy necessities and the wounds of thy soul.

When thou dost pray, or talk, or wheresoever thou art, let not thy thoughts dwell upon the Brothers—or any others who may be present—for to do so doth greatly distract thy thoughts from thyself, doth dissolve the virtue of thy mind, doth make thee bitter and suspicious, doth darken thine understanding, doth engender forgetfulness of God and love for the applause of men; doth befog the mind and disturb the conscience. Keep thy heart at peace and turned away from shadows and from sin, but turned toward God.

(37) Let thine aspect be like that of the other Brothers, neither too severe, nor ostentatiously cheerful, and so continue to comport thyself when thou art alone within thy cell; and if in anything that thou doest thou art inclined to comport thyself otherwise, strive to amend in this; so shalt thou always do the will of God with a quiet mind, shalt guard thyself from thy vices and continue at all times cheerful.

In every way and in all things beware of acting hastily, but do everything deliberately and without ostentation. Thou shouldest never speak harshly to any, nor bring a railing or derisive accusation against any, but rather implore and admonish him as charity doth demand.

Whenever thou art disquieted in mind bear patiently and quietly those things that are contrary to thy nature and disposition, but for the time being strive not to hinder nor do anything at all in that matter about which thou art disquieted beyond reason; wait rather until God's grace and thy peace of mind return, and meanwhile flee to thy cell and to prayer because thou art weak and beset, and think "In your patience ye shall possess your souls." From time to time choose to be alone, to labour with thine hands, to pray patiently, and to act without unreasoning haste. Always choose such matters

for thy meditation about God and the Holy Scriptures as shall kindle thee to the Love and Fear of God or to horror for thy vices.

(38) Whatsoever thou doest in temporal matters, give not too much heed to appearance and outward show, but aim at doing the Will of God only and commit everything to Him.

Turn away thy heart and thine eyes from men; be constant to that which is within and forget that which is without: reach out to heaven with prayer, sighs, study and repentance, and whet thy mind continually upon these. Avoid ostentation and presumption, and put away the images of men from thy heart.

All virtue, all progress, doth consist in this, to follow the Will of God and to please Him.

Strive for this that thine intention may be toward God and according to His will, and cast away the passions of thy soul.

Take this as a rule that cannot misguide thee: whatsoever our Father Florentius and the Brethren may determine, that is God's will for thee to do, for He doth dwell in them and they seek nothing save His pleasure.

Do everything as Florentius shall advise:—and if he is absent act in like manner by the counsel of Gerard in all things as if it were the counsel of God; for Gerard is far wiser, more humble, more prudent, more spiritual, more thoughtful than thou art, and his acts are more in accord with the Will of God than are thine.

Thou shouldest be very careful to avoid the occasion of sin. Often when thou art at peace thou seemest to thyself to be somewhat, but when thou dost mingle with outward things that which was hidden in thee cometh to light—for this thou oughtest deeply to abase thyself. Much talking doth take a man away from himself, leadeth him into ignorance, taketh away his forethought, and doth bring forth confusion. Therefore it is needful for one who is disposed to much speaking to meditate often, and pause or check himself so as to think whether what he shall say shall be pleasing to God or whether it shall tend to boastfulness, love for the praise of men and vain-glory.

For thy words, look to it that they be such as are necessary, pious and profitable; but before all things that they be in accordance with the Will of God. Thou mayest by no means speak loosely nor by thy words incite others thereto.

(39) Never speak hastily and mockingly to a man of his faults before others, for to do this is a sign of pride and presumption, and is an ill example to others.

Learn to talk little, to use but few words, and to speak with forethought. Wait while others speak, and be careful lest thou listen to aught that may do thee hurt.

Sift also the words of every man to find whether they be true or slanderous.

Be firmly resolved by the Grace of God not to speak of the evil deeds of any, nor willingly to hear of them save to some good purpose, and even then be cautious lest thou be led astray.

Let it be thy habit not to pour out thy heart too earnestly upon anything whatsoever, whether it be a temporal or whether it be a spiritual matter; but always hold back modestly in fear of thine own vices. Go forward with discretion and step by step; advance in due season and never altogether retreat, but keep thy heart sustained by the Word of God and so bent backward as to hold in check all thy vices in general, but especially any one vice which for the time thou dost particularly fear. Thus, by God's grace, with due moderation and mature thought as in His sight, speak and do whatsoever thou thinkest shall please Him.

In thine eating avoid greed and gluttony; rather restrain thine appetite, that the blind and confused desires of nature may be enlightened by repentance and by a hunger to hear the reading. Take some portion of the reading and as it were ruminate thereon, or similarly that portion of Scripture, "A certain man made a great supper." If at any time thou art disordered or oppressed in the head after eating, then flee to thy cell, or by talking awhile with other men, strive for the future to be more cautious in keeping guard over thyself; yet to pray and flee is safer. "Happy is the man that feareth alway;" and know this in very truth, that when in place of being afraid thou dost fall into security, thou fallest away from God and art led captive by devils and by thine own passions. Yet thou oughtest to fear in such a manner as shall make thee trust the more in God; the weaker thou seemest to thyself the stronger shall He make thee. Therefore it is good rather to trust others and to be fearful for thyself. In the things of God learn virtue and conduct from others, and fear to boast thyself;—for thy sake Christ became a learner; for thy sake He held His peace.

(40) Learn to remain within and to live the common social life amid the Brethren and the rest, and think highly of them; consider their virtues and thine own vices. When thou art in company with another, always think about some virtue of his, and of thine own lack thereof, so as to humiliate thyself inwardly for those vices of thine which are known to God, to the Angels, and to thine own self. Approach thy studies as if to take food for thy soul, that she being refreshed by what thou readest may learn to be wholly occupied therewith, to forget temporal things and to be held back from sin. Also study is of no great profit unless thou dost pray and so deal therewith as food is dealt with by the teeth—otherwise it is but little good. Therefore deal thus with it, and let it pass into thy soul, like food into the belly, to be transformed into virtue and good works, that the soul may be sustained thereby as by food. For as the body is refreshed by food so is the soul by virtue; thou oughtest never to study anything that doth not refresh the soul, for the fruit of study is the strength of the soul and the gaining of virtue. To study for the sake of teaching others or for any other purpose else save as aforesaid doth not nourish the soul, but doth make it unwholesome as superfluous humours make the body. Such study doth engender vain-glory, a heart puffed up, disorderly manners, empty thoughts, unstableness of mind, forgetfulness and light thoughts of God, love for the praise of man, a troubled conscience, a darkened understanding, and it doth render the soul faint and weak rather than refresh it. Wherefore to study in moderation and as it were to chew thoroughly what thou readest doth better refresh the soul than to study many things thoughtlessly and without so doing. It doth follow that that soul is dead, or doth consume herself which doth not so digest the word of God as to convert it into virtue and good works; such an one doth decay by reason of divers lusts and the desire for honour, and is eaten of devils as the body is of worms.

(41) When the clock doth strike bethink thee that thou art in the midst of thine enemies, and art not sufficient of thyself; therefore cry to God and pray, saying—“Forsake me not, O Lord God, Thou art my God, depart not far from me.” Sometimes invoke the Blessed Virgin and say the Ave Maria. Remember that God seeth thee and that thy works are presented before Him by the Angels, whatsoever good thou hast done, the progress thou hast made, and the evil thou hast committed. When thou hearest the bell, think, “Arise, ye dead and come to judgement.”

Always strive to follow the will of others in those things that are not sinful or contrary to the will of God, and always put aside thine own desire and thine own counsel.

Learn to bear those things that are vexatious to all men, and to thee are difficult, though it cost thee toil and pain; and never answer any other man impatiently. Rather choose to be pitiful and prefer excess in this to overhardness.

When thou dost ask a question of thy Superior or Rector remember that it is the Lord Who dwelleth in them that speaketh to thee through their mouth and declareth His will; think how perilous it is for thee to resist His ordinance that is declared through them.

Think many times of thy daily sins, from what root they spring. Inordinate fear or too great presumption do hinder thee every day.

To be inclined towards riches, pleasures, high esteem, the praise of men, the delights of the world, and thine own will; to be inclined towards these, I say, and to do that which is good in thine own eyes, and to avoid and think lightly of humility is to go back to sin, and to be turned away from Christ, and from the rule of thy spiritual Father; for the very road to virtue is this, to resist sin and humbly to obey one's Superior.

LIFE OF HENRY BRUNE

(1) I OUGHT not to pass over one who was a man of deep devotion and holy simplicity, and a priest of angelic purity; and I think it fitting to place his life next in order to that of Lubert, who was his comrade from the first and his most beloved fellow-priest, and to set forth here somewhat in praise of him. This is that Henry Brune who was the companion of Lubert; a man beloved of God and accepted of men; one that was kindly to all and burdensome to none. He was born in Holland and was a citizen of Leyden, being sprung from honourable parents and lineage. He, however, counted the riches and honours of the world as of no worth, and withdrawing from the sight of his friends, sought the Lord in the days of his youth, and clave to Him with a perfect heart even unto his old age. He remained under obedience in the House of Florentius, in all humility and meekness, hearing the confessions of the Devout and celebrating Mass with great devotion and reverence; for he lived in quietness and simplicity of heart without a care for temporal things, and dwelt amid the Brethren uncomplainingly, having a good reputation throughout all Deventer, and being known amongst the Devout in divers places as an Israelite indeed in whom was no guile or wickedness; as one without bitterness like a dove and gifted with a singular innocence of life. His eyes were ever looking to the Lord, and whensoever he could be alone he ceased not from prayer and devout meditation.

(2) Once in winter time he was sitting by the fire, warming his hands, but he turned his face to the wall and secretly continued his prayers, observing strictly the rule of silence. And I when I saw this, was greatly edified, and loved him yet the more, nor did I ever hear a complaint concerning him save that he celebrated Mass somewhat more slowly than the others; and yet by so doing he drew many laymen to devotion when he celebrated, and this tardiness was readily excused to him since it sprang from his unwillingness to be separated from his beloved Jesus.

(3) It happened that one of the faithful was tempted in a matter of faith by a secret assault of the Devil, for he began to have some doubt concerning the Sacrament of the Altar and the Presence therein of the Very Body of Christ. And so, as he stood to hear the Mass which this devout priest was celebrating, he often sighed, being grieved by the wicked suggestions of that malignant spirit, and he prayed to the Lord that he would deign to pity him for his wavering mind. And the merciful God who doth succour souls to their salvation in many and marvellous ways, did teach this man and console him comfortably in the faith by showing him a new and strange vision. For he saw not the Species of bread between the hands of the priest, but in place thereof there appeared before him the form of One more glorious than the sons of men; and being greatly bewildered and trembling, he returned thanks and blessed God. But the priest knew nothing of this and finished the office of the Mass with the Benediction after the usual manner, for this vision was not shown for the priest's sake, for he was full of faith and grace, but to strengthen one who was weak in the faith.

(4) Since I am now speaking of the Revered Sacrament I will also mention a similar thing concerning a priest in the province of Frisia, whose life was less praiseworthy. This story I heard from the mouth of our Brother Alardus of pious memory, who told me that there was with him a certain priest whose learning was small and his reputation not bright: and when this priest entered the Church to celebrate the Divine Mysteries, an honourable Matron, knowing his lack of learning, began to think scornfully of him and to murmur, saying: "What art thou trying to do, ignorant man that thou art? How can one that is so unworthy duly celebrate so great a Sacrament?" While she was thinking this the priest began to celebrate and to touch the Holy Elements and consecrate Them; and when the Sacred Host was elevated after the Consecration according to the Ritual of the Church, and all the congregation were adoring in faith upon their bended knees, the aforesaid matron opened her eyes, and to her amazement and perplexity saw, at the moment of the Elevation, the Figure of the Man Christ. After Mass was done she told this in private to another priest and humbly confessed the evil thoughts which she had formerly had about the Celebrant; and her Confessor having diligently inquired how the matter came to pass, and concerning the Vision, answered her, saying: "God hath allowed this to come to pass for thy Salvation, lest in future thou shouldest

think evil of priests or doubt that they do truly consecrate even if they are of ill-reputation and unworthy life.” The woman, hearing this, held her faith sure and left it to God to judge His priests.

(5) Let it not irk thee to hear yet another miracle concerning this most Holy Sacrament.

When I entered the Monastery of Mount St. Agnes to sojourn there, a certain Religious Clerk, who abode there for a long time with me, had occasion to go to a neighbouring Monastery: and when he was on the way, one that was a layman joined himself to him and became his travelling companion and talked to him as a friend. So as they were walking together and conversing about God, the layman said to the Clerk who accompanied him: “My friend, I will tell thee one small matter that hath happened in my life.” For a long time I was in such a condition that when I entered a Church I could never see the Sacrament of the Altar in the Priest’s hands, and thinking that I stood too far off, and that owing to the dimness of my eyes I could not see well, I approached as near as I dared and as was permitted—but this profited me not at all, for still I saw nothing between the Priest’s hands. This continued to me for more than a year, but I did not duly consider what the reason might be. At length, coming to myself and being greatly perplexed I betook me to a priest and laid bare the whole matter in confession; and he heard me kindly, and carefully searching out the secrets of my heart, found that I was in a state of enmity towards a neighbour to whom I would on no account forgive a trespass that he had committed against me. So the good and prudent Confessor, when he knew of this sin of malice, instructed me with chiding and admonition, affirming that it would be most perilous to continue thus hard of heart, and that I could never deserve pardon unless from my heart I forgave all trespasses. And this he said had happened to me because I was not worthy to look upon the Holy Sacrament since mine eye was evil. Hearing this pious admonition of the priest I consented to his counsel, and with hearty repentance forgave all injuries, resolving for the future not to avenge myself, so that I might be reconciled to God and regain the grace that I had lost. Then at length the priest gave me absolution, and having imposed penance upon me, let me go. Immediately afterward I went into the Church and heard Mass, and having regained the favour of God I saw most clearly the Holy Body of Christ in

the hands of the priest, and returning thanks to God I blessed Him for all His marvellous works.

(6) But I must return to my task and deal briefly with the happy death of Henry Brune, for as his life was adorned with virtue, so the end thereof was deservedly a happy passing away from this world. Amongst the other virtues of this pious and devout man was this, that he was subject in all humility to his superior, giving a good example to priests and clerks not to exalt themselves above the younger Brethren by reason of their priestly rank. Sometimes on feast days he celebrated before the lepers by leave of Florentius, and I served for him on those occasions.

(7) Once he went with the Brothers to obtain indulgences at Arnheim, and while they were in the way he was asked for what consideration he would give up his indulgences. To this he replied: "I would gladly give them all in exchange for this grace, that whensoever I should say anything good to anyone, he should straightway be converted and amend his life." The Brothers who heard it were marvellously edified by his good reply which proceeded from that earnest zeal for souls which dwelt within his pious and pure heart.

(8) So in the year of our Lord 1439 the plague was raging at Zutphen where the Brothers of the House of Florentius, and many other Religious, then dwelt, having fled from Deventer; and Henry Brune fell sick with the disease and lay at the point of death, confidently waiting to receive the reward of his labours from the Hand of the Lord. He had continued in the Community almost from the time of Gerard Groote and had fulfilled the Office of the Priesthood for about forty-four years, having far outlived all the rest of those who had known their first fervour in the Religious Life with him. But throughout his days he laboured at the work of writing, and I have often seen him washing vessels in the kitchen, and doing other lowly tasks.

(9) He knew scarcely anything save the things that pertain to God and the salvation of souls, nor cared to speak of aught else. And that which had been the habit of his life he maintained unto death, for he recited all the Hours till the very moment that he gave up his soul, nor during his illness did he cease his reading of the Holy Scriptures, for he sought comfort rather in the Word of God than in the discourses of men. The departure of this most godly priest was in the aforesaid year of our Lord, on the day

following the Feast of Saint Bartholomew the Apostle (being the feastday of St. Gregory, Bishop of Utrecht), at about the eleventh hour of the day, and he was buried in the Cemetery of Saint Walburga, the Virgin, which pertains to the College of Canons in Zutphen.

THE LIFE OF GERARD OF ZUTPHEN

(1) NOW it is my purpose to trace briefly the virtues of the devout and learned Gerard of Zutphen, and to set up his writings and example before the coming generation as a pattern to them, and a good memorial of his life, for he hath deserved to be named in a foremost place amid those brothers who formed the first of our Communities and were zealous followers of the Divine Law. Although he lived for but a short time, yet he left us Doctrinal Treatises that are most acceptable, for he was a very diligent student of the Holy Scriptures, and from the dark sayings of the learned he extracted divers aromatic spices having virtue against the distempers of vice to heal the languors of the soul, as doth appear particularly in two books which he put forth, of which one doth begin “A certain Man” and the other is entitled, “Blessed is the Man.” From his infancy and the days of his youth he was disposed to learning, quick of wit, eager to study the liberal arts, and heartily averse from worldly business and everything that might hinder the pursuit of wisdom.

(2) When he grew to manhood, being a youth of virtuous disposition, he went to foreign schools to be the better instructed, and busied himself with all diligence to be regular in attendance, to rise up very early in the morning and hasten in due time to hear the lectures. All the time given to study seemed short to him, for he was ever desirous of gathering from his master’s lips some yet more fruitful knowledge which he seized and stored up in the inner chambers of his heart. The ardour of his mind for progress in learning burned so fiercely that he was greatly downcast when the teachers in the Schools did not lecture; and for this cause he sometimes wept because there were no lectures on holidays, for he was ill-content that any day should go by without yielding some fruit of learning. His ingenuous mind was far removed from the sloth of dullards and the idle roving of the wanton who run about the streets and take delight in senseless pastimes, but hate the School and seldom visit a Church. Gerard, on the other hand,

thought upon the purpose for which he had come, and the reason for which Schools were founded, wherefore he applied himself zealously to study; and so wisely did he profit thereby as afterward to deserve to become a learner of that Wisdom that is eternal in place of the wisdom of the Schools; for by the ordinance of God he came at last to study at Deventer, and having found the devout Brothers there he attached himself closely to Florentius, and being by this time sufficiently instructed, he quitted the unstable worldly life for the sake of the love of Christ and his own Salvation.

(3) Being converted therefore he began to be diligent and instant in the amending of his life, to be zealous for spiritual progress, to separate his mind from all the entanglements of temporal things, and like a good son of the Cloister to love his cell, to give himself up to spiritual exercises, and to spend his time in study and writing. For this cause many wondered, because he was seldom seen to go forth, and sought no solace outside the Monastery. Yet he held the holy writings to stand for his greatest solace, and in place of seeking the wide expanse of earthly fields, he sought the hallowed mansions of Heaven. When he went across the street to the Church he seemed not to notice the presence of other men, and when he was asked whether he was not hindered by them of the world who passed him, he answered: "It is to me as though a herd of swine were passing; what is it to me that they wear the form of men?"

(4) As he sat in his cell he was so occupied with his work, writing, reading, and prayer, that often he left his window shut all day and did not look out, although the weather might be fair enough. One of the Brothers therefore said to him: "Why dost thou not open thy window? Thou dost sit here shut up as it were in a cellar, and it would be good for thee to breathe the fresh air"; and Gerard, being wholly given up to his zeal for discipline, replied: "If I had spare time and could take forethought about such matters, perhaps it would be good to do so." When he was asked by the same brother what his thoughts were when the bell rang for the morning meal, he said: "I go to one duty as to another." He scarce cared at all what he ate, nor what the hour for his meal might be, and when the necessity for taking food was instant upon him, even then he hastened to hear the reading rather than to refresh the body, for he took no thought for this latter, but rather was careful to restore the powers of his soul, and if Florentius had not anxiously provided for his needs he would soon have destroyed himself and perished.

Thus it came about that for a long time he bore without complaint and secretly a disease which physicians call fistula—for he was unwilling that any should be troubled with the care of him, or that expenses should be incurred on his behalf, and he preferred to suffer pain in the flesh as a wholesome medicine for the soul. But when Florentius discovered this he called a physician to take charge of him until he should be healed.

(5) He was librarian and keeper of the books, and showed great diligence in collecting and copying them. Likewise he lent copies of the sacred books to many Clerks outside the monastery that they might have readings therefrom in their own houses and in schools, and so avoid the telling of idle stories and aimless wanderings on holidays, which are seasons during which Clerks are specially admonished to give their mind to holy things. He used to say, “These books preach and teach better than any words of ours; for holy books are the luminaries of our souls and their comfort; they are the true medicine of life, which are not less necessary to us during our sojourn here than are the Sacraments of the Church.” He loved the books of sacred Theology above all the riches of the world, and rejoiced more over a fair writ copy than over a sumptuous banquet, or wine of most sweet savour; for he knew that they shall not be wise who take pleasure in delicate meats and drinks; but they who are given up to sacred studies shall be filled with wisdom, and access to the hidden treasures of Heaven shall be their guerdon. Wherefore he dealt with books in all reverence, reading them with the utmost diligence and keeping them in careful ward.

(6) Many Clerks came to him to resolve divers doubtful matters, and heard his discourses gladly, for he was a man that was ready of speech and learned, proved by many disputations, and having knowledge how to answer every man. Florentius often summoned him to settle the business of the Community, and with his assistance was wont to deal with those matters in particular which demanded skilled knowledge of law and also seemed to require spiritual treatment. In such cases if any grave or difficult question arose he reserved it for the examination and decision of the wise whenever it was desirable to do so, and he listened reverently to learned doctors, followed the authority of the Saints without hesitation, and confirmed his own decisions clearly by sacred testimony. Wherefore he was highly praised by wise and learned men for the abilities that were united in him, but he himself accounted the praise of men as nothing, for he did not strive

to pursue after subtilty of speech, but rather to preserve a good conscience. So in the understanding of the Holy Scriptures his long application to study profited him less than the informing grace of the Holy Spirit Who giveth understanding to the little ones and doth reveal His mysteries to minds that are pure. Verily Gerard directed all his exercises toward the attainment of this purity, impressing the fear of God upon those who were newly converted, chiding the slothful, and exhorting those who would go forward in virtue to mortify their vices.

(7) “If,” said he, “we neglect to fight against our vices, our passions shall prevail, and we shall fall into the snares of the devil who is ever lying in wait to hinder our progress. Therefore we must labour with all diligence to quit us like men in fighting against them, for a crown of Eternal Glory hath been promised to him that over cometh.” After that he had received the Light this Priest lived humbly and devoutly among the Brothers, being filled with grace, and though he had read many books, yet before his death he began to read again “The Mirror for Monks” and “The Progress of the Religious” as if he were a new convert, and from these books he strove to gather afresh the spirit of devotion, and to renew himself again to his first fervour. Yet burning with such zeal for progress he did not long survive, but mindful of Lubert that was dead—a friend whom he had deeply loved and for whose departure he had shed many tears—he soon followed after him. He was sent with Brother Amilius to the Abbot at Dickeninghe, a man learned in Canon law whom he used often to consult in legal questions, and as he was returning from his journey he came to Windesheim, and while passing the night there fell sick unto death.

(8) And Amilius said to him, “It seemeth to me that thou art near to die,” to whom Gerard made answer, “So seemeth it to me also,” and so as his sickness increased upon him, he breathed forth the breath of his life, like one steeped in a gentle sleep, during the night of the Feast of St. Barbara the Virgin, in the year of our Lord 1398, and in the thirty-first year of his age. His body was buried by the Prior and the Brothers, with due honour, in the path before the door of the Church.

Florentius hearing of the death of the beloved Gerard was very sad, and he with all the Brothers wept with great lamentation, for their deep love for him constrained them to mourn for the taking away of a brother most dear,

who was a pillar of their House, and, as it were, another hand to Florentius in performing the business thereof.

But blessed be God Who lent us such a man!

LIFE OF AMILIUS OF BUREN

(1) NOW I must commemorate and set forth in this book the life of the beloved Amilius, a priest worthy to serve God. He succeeded Florentius, our Reverend Father, and was the second Ruler of the House, being one whom Florentius loved as a familiar friend, and a man decked with many jewels of virtue.

He sprang from a family of the Province of Gelders in the territory of the Count de Buren; and numbering amongst his forefathers men who had been Ministers of State, he was esteemed to hold like rank with them.

(2) When he came to study at Deventer, where a school for special learning was then flourishing, he showed such diligence and progress in the scholastic arts that in a short time he took his place amongst the foremost students as one of the more learned, and by reason of the subtilty of his understanding was held in more than ordinary favour by the Master of the School.

But by the gift of God it came about that a mind so great was not wasted away in a worldly life, nor sought to gain earthly honours through knowledge, but counted all such things as dross. So, being prevented by the Grace of Heaven, and inspired by the Most High, Amilius came to the House of Florentius and was drawn to him by the holiness of his discourse; he submitted himself to the counsel of the Holy Ghost speaking through the mouth of this Reverend Father, who gave him the monitions of that Wisdom that is unto salvation.

Amilius therefore putting aside his studies, and abandoning his carnal friends, became an humble Brother and a disciple of Christ; and by his example he was profitable to many by leading them to renounce the world and to serve Christ. He gave himself up to the fulfilment of the most humble duties; for his soul's salvation he spared not his body, nor sought he anything for his own advantage in this present life. In the virtue of holy

obedience he bore heavy labour, such as milling and brewing and other tasks entrusted to him, which he performed cheerfully and with fidelity.

(3) Many wondered that, not being large of frame, he could carry out such heavy tasks, which assuredly he had not learned during his life in the world, nor had been accustomed to aforetime; tasks, moreover, which a stronger than he would scarce have undertaken for worldly gain. But the love of Christ and the brotherly charity which availeth for all things ministered strength to his goodwill, so that his reward might be the greater in proportion as he laboured more fervently than all.

So pleasing was he to God and to the Brothers that, after Lubert and Gerard fell on sleep, he was immediately ordained to the priesthood whilst Florentius was yet alive, and when the time came that he should celebrate his first Mass, Florentius, clad in his surplice, attended him until he had finished the Office to the honour of God perfectly and with devotion. He celebrated at the Altar of St. Paul in the church of which Florentius was Vicar, before High Mass and privately, so that there was not a large congregation present.

(4) So at the time of the Plague this man, eminent for piety, truly faithful in everything that was entrusted to him, and a comfortable friend to all that were in need, took charge of the stricken, being ready in the spirit of obedience and fraternal charity either to live or die with his Brethren. For he stood fearlessly by John Ketel, the Cook of the Community, by Lubert, and many others who were seized with the like disease, ministering to them until their death; and having rendered such service oftentimes to the Brethren he himself fell sick, but amended again, for God had pity upon the Brethren to their comfort lest they should have sorrow upon sorrow.

It was from his mouth that I received many of those good things concerning the virtues of the Brothers which I have written in this book as occasion demanded, although I have not expressly named him as having told me of them.

(5) Once he came to the Brothers at Mount St. Agnes, and speaking to some who were known to him, exhorted them to abide in the holy manner of life of the Order so as to go forward in virtue. By his virtuous character and gracious words I was greatly edified, for he stood there like some gentle lamb serene of countenance and with eyes looking stedfastly before him, not regarding the faces of them that stood by. After the happy

departure of Florentius, who had appointed Amilius to be his successor in the governance of the House, he fell asleep in the Lord on the Vigil of the Feast of Saint Barnabas the Apostle, in the 1404th year of our Lord, having ruled the House well for four years and three months. He was buried next to Lubert in the Cemetery of St. Lebuin, on the south side of the Church not far from the Priest's Vestry.

(6) Amilius's Exhortation to the keeping of Brotherly Love

"Hitherto have we continued, my most beloved brothers, ever united and in mutual charity, but now as it seemeth I am about to depart from you." Wherefore I do heartily entreat you that as ye have been fervent hitherto to keep that unity (for which be praise and glory to Christ), so ye maintain the same with steadfastness and perseverance; that in all things ye lovingly obey him to whom is committed the care of this House, even as ye would obey Christ and as hitherto ye have obeyed me, not considering his person, but Christ in him; for this cause think not the precepts he may give you to be evil, without reason, or contrary to your well-being, since it is not he that giveth them, but the Lord through him. Obey him therefore for Christ's sake and as if he were Christ Himself. Hasten to fulfil his precepts as though they were given from Heaven, for the Lord is not always pleased to reveal His will directly, or by miracles or by angels, but hath so ordained that we should know the same through a human deputy, whom we must obey in all his commands and precepts as we should obey the Lord Himself.

(7) "Therefore whatsoever duties or precepts of charity he layeth upon you, these fulfil with willing and cheerful minds, nor think that these things shall lack their fruit or hinder your devout exercises or your well-being; for a thousand such exercises are nothing compared to humility and the subjection that a man doth undergo willingly." So even if his commands should seem to be without reason, and like to be a great hindrance to you, both at the present and in the time to come, nevertheless pass no judgement thereupon, but alway continue humbly in subjection, nothing judging. And as I have often said, look to Christ, not to the man in his own person; ye are not subject to him because of his own proper qualities, but ye submit for the sake of God, for your eternal salvation and progress, and for the Kingdom of Heaven. As ye have begun so continue to the end, passing no judgement upon your Father, but reverencing him deeply, and in all things humbly and cheerfully obeying him; think not within yourselves "we are as aged, as

skilled, as learned, as wise as he,” for ye are not put under him for his own sake but for Christ’s, and for your own humiliation and safety, that ye may have recourse to him as to a father for protection and for counsel.

(8) “What is there between you and me, Brethren, save that ye have obeyed me for God’s sake, and what between me and Florentius (or Gerard if I had been here with him) save that I obeyed him for the Kingdom of Heaven’s sake.” Therefore everyone should think how he can humiliate and submit himself, and study to be contented whatever office is enjoined upon him, whether it be small or whether it be great; nor should any be wise in his own conceit, but rather think that whatsoever may have been ordained for him, that is the better for him. If any would be excused from any office saying that he is willing to give way in all else, but that he ought not to be degraded to such or such an office, I had rather cast him forth from the House than give him such exemption, because at some other time when his own will desired an office other than that assigned to him, he would be rebellious in this also. But in the matter of willingness to give way, let a man think of naught save Christ. Brethren, let us be, as it were, members one of another and each sustain the other, which if we do not, our estate shall quickly perish. Let us strive each in turn to keep Charity and Unity, and let every one seek to be as it were trodden under the foot of another and so no adversity shall have power to hurt us.

(9) “I know of nothing else to say to you save that which the Lord said to His disciples just before His Ascension, namely, that ye love one another even as Christ loved you, and that ye pray for me; and I, if I come to the Lord, will do whatsoever I can for you. In that I have often borne myself ill and have been a scandal to you, I pray you to forgive me; likewise for my negligence and the other many vices in which I have been entangled, all of which I would readily confess before you but that I fear lest some of you should be scandalized.” So saying he put off his hood and besought pardon of the Brethren for his faults with compunction and all humility, and began to weep, seeing which the Brothers knelt and wept long and bitterly. These were the last words of Amilius which he spoke for the building up of mutual love and peace.

LIFE OF JAMES OF VIANA

Concerning James of Viana

(1) JAMES of Viana, a man strong and wise in character, was endowed with much grace of humility, repentance and spiritual insight, so that he often sighed and what for his daily failures, strictly examining himself thereupon. Likewise he charged against himself actions which another would praise in him, for in everything that he did he was fearful knowing that it must be weighed in the strict balance of the Judge on High, Who shall judge not open negligence only, but also the secret stains of the conscience. Far from his heart were proud thoughts of himself and the wish to be accounted good, for he desired to be lower than all and to give way even to those beneath him as though they were his betters. Amongst the writers he was eminent being diligent in the copying of books and in his care for them.

(2) When a young man sought to be instructed by him in spiritual exercises, James in his humility immediately confessed that he was slothful and a miserable sinner who had not yet really grasped the first principles of virtue; and he began to commend certain of the younger Brethren, saying that they were men of fervent spirit and understanding.

Upon another time the same youth being very sad told James of the distress of his heart, and desired to hear some word of comfort from him, and James spake kind and comfortable words to him, exhorting him to be patient and to wait humbly for the grace of God, because the good Lord is wont to be present with them that are contrite of heart, as saith the Psalmist, "According to the multitude of my sorrows in my heart Thy comforts have given joy to my soul"; and the young man being thus comforted, afterwards often remembered these words that are so sweet when any sorrow came upon him, for when the comfort of man faileth, one must flee to the Divine, and think how great Saints and the Elect also have sometimes suffered heaviness and desolation.

(3) So because James was a man of laudable life, and coveted to remain in the lowest rank and the simple condition of a Clerk, therefore by reason of his virtues and this notable gift of humility, he was promoted to the Priesthood by the good pleasure of God, and the counsel of Florentius and his Brethren. But this promotion was very grievous to him so that he wept bitterly when he knew that he must needs be ordained, for he confessed that he was too unworthy of such a rank, and he deemed that they who had given this counsel had greatly erred in that they had determined to promote an unfit person. But the more he abased himself the more pleasing was he to God and to the Brethren, and the more gladly did Florentius promote him; for at that time the Priesthood was a thing rare and precious amongst the Devout, because none dared to accept that office save one that was righteous and compelled thereto for the Common good, for all avoided higher station and chose to abide in a lower room and a lowlier office. Wherefore Florentius, himself a gem of the Priesthood, is reported once to have said, "If I were not a priest and had not the care of others I might be able wholly to amend myself, for higher place doth often cause disturbances of mind from which a good man that is under governance and liveth without the care of external things is the more free."

(4) Once when he wished to meditate upon his failures, James secretly climbed up to the sollar of the House, and with heavy sighs wrote down his faults upon a Tablet so that he might not forget anything that he thought he ought to confess.

When one asked him of the manner of life of the House, he said, "If any would live with us it is needful that he abase himself and make himself less than all. Such an one hath here a Paradise and is abundantly content." Florentius used sometimes to reprove him and recall him from the unmeasured heaviness of his compunction, lest by too great severity he should exceed the bounds of prudence, and he bore the reproof patiently, greatly humbling himself for that he had gone forward somewhat imprudently. The fervency of his spirit surpassed the strength of his body, but his good intention was his excuse, for the end thereof was to seek after God. After this he fell into bodily sickness, and his strength failing him by little and little, he died during the lifetime of Florentius, that is, on the day following the Feast of St. Gregory the Pope, to whom he was specially

devoted, and in the year of the Lord 1400. He was buried with his Brethren in the cemetery of the great church that is dedicated to St. Lebuin.

LIFE OF JOHN CACABUS

Concerning John Cacabus, called in the vulgar tongue, Ketel, an humble cook

(1) THERE was an humble servant of Christ in the House of Florentius named John Ketel, to whom were assigned the duties of the kitchen. This man, despising all worldly things, chose the path of holy poverty on earth, that in Heaven he might have part in the eternal riches with the Saints; and for his works of mercy and charity, his reward was to enter into everlasting felicity.

Long ago he was very well known to me in the days when I resorted oft to Deventer, and he showed such humility in his manner of life, and the example which he gave, that he preached contempt of the world by his deeds more than by his words. Yet his discourse was no vain thing when he spake of God, for he persuaded his hearers that all temporal greatness is contemptible and that no labour undertaken for the love of Christ should be abhorred. But who could tell worthily the virtues of this man? and yet charity doth demand that I speak a few words that this pearl buried in the Lord's field may not be hidden too long, but may be brought forth to the light for the edification of many.

(2) His native town was Duseborch, which lies in the Countship of Marck, not far from Wesel, and near the course of the Rhine. His mother Christina, following her son's footsteps, ended her days in the House of the Sisters at Deventer. That son had been at first a trader in the regions of Flanders and Holland, but his fixed abode was at Dordrecht with the merchants that trafficked by sea. He often had the good inspiration to serve God, but knew not how to make a beginning, nor by what way to travel to the fulfilment of his desire, and when he had long continued in the successful conduct of his worldly business, at length being inspired by better counsels, he thought to put away the deceits of this world, and the heavy yoke of the service thereof, and to turn his will to fulfilling the Office

of the Priesthood so as to serve God in more honourable wise in that state of life. Therefore on this account he put aside his worldly traffick, and hearing of the repute of the Devout Clerks at Deventer, he came thither to visit the School with certain other men of good purpose. He had already gained some knowledge of Latin, so as to be able to understand the Scripture, and when he saw the holy conversation of Florentius and his brothers, he was changed into another man, and together with many others was fired with a desire to renounce the world. He left following the rules of Alexander and Donatus, and entered into the School where spiritual exercises are taught, so as to learn the Will of God in the House of Florentius, where many were gathered together and served Christ, being founded in humility and made fast in holy Charity.

(3) He was instant in his request to serve the Brothers in the kitchen that so long as he lived he might, in that humble condition, offer a service pleasing to God. So after many prayers he was admitted on probation, and putting aside his secular garb he was clad in an old habit, and a linen apron that was suited to the defilements of cooking; but he rejoiced more to be clad in such a garment than he would had he been robed in the Priestly stole; and he became a pattern of humility and lowliness to all who were in the House, giving himself up wholly to mortification for the Love of the Crucified Lord. The fame of his good conversation went forth to the ears of men without, and many that had high place marvelled that he who had been formerly a wealthy merchant, now had become a poor cook and an humble Brother. For though he had once designed to climb by the ladder of learning to the dignity of a Priest of the Church, he did afterwards put aside all desire for the pinnacle of honour and the pride of dignity, and sought the lowest room, thus imitating Christ Who humbled Himself and taking upon Him the form of a servant, ministered to His disciples.

(4) While he had continued in the world he had prepared him certain priestly vestments adorned in costly wise, and having designs inwoven in golden thread. So gorgeous were they that the bishop of a cathedral, or a ruling abbot, might have been honoured in the wearing of them. But now being informed to his soul's health by the Spirit of God, John put aside and rejected all of these, and selling to others his chasuble and silken cope, vested himself in vile rags, a dark tunic and a gray cloak, being purposed to serve in, the kitchen. And for this he returned hearty thanks to God that He

had called him to this ministry, and had not allowed him to perish with the multitude in the world, wherefore he sometimes said to the Brothers with great cheerfulness of heart, “Am I not become a great Priest and Prelate? for twice every day I administer communion to the Brothers”; by which parable he signified that he prepared their meal both morning and evening and so renewed Christ in the person of each one of the Brothers.

(5) He was often found praying on bended knee before the kitchen fire, and while his hands held the cooking vessels his mouth poured forth devout Psalms. He made the kitchen an house of prayer, for he knew that God is everywhere, and the material fire was to him a flame whereat to kindle the fervour of his spirit. During his labours he would murmur melodiously the hymns that he had heard sung in Church, and thus bearing God in mind, he was outwardly busied with his cooking, but inwardly at leisure to meditate of heavenly things, for he passed no time unfruitfully, nor for a moment neglected his spiritual exercises. He was diligent to prepare food for the Brothers in due time and carefully, for he was the master cook, but yet he provided nothing superfluous, and gave to others the better meats, keeping the commoner for himself.

He chose three Saints above others for his own special devotion, namely, St. Alexius, who for a long while hid himself in his father’s house in the garb of a stranger, and patiently bore much contumely from his own family; St. Francis, who loved poverty, and would have no earthly possessions in this world; and St. Elizabeth the widow, who being filled with the bowels of mercy, distributed all her goods to the poor and despised all worldly riches and honours as dross.

(6) Once he was speaking with his companions concerning holy poverty, and so fervent was the sound of his words that by his bearing and the transfiguration of his countenance one would have thought that he was all on fire within.

On a holy day when certain Clerks from the School had come to see him, he began to speak good words to them, and amongst other things said, “Well do we find it written in the Gospel, ‘Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven,’ but nowhere do we find it written therein, ‘Blessed are the Masters in Arts.’ ” And his hearers marvelling at the novelty of his words, received them with much reverence; likewise he explained his saying to them on the ground that knowledge without

humility profiteth not, but, that in truth the Kingdom of God is attained by poverty of spirit, that is, by humility; for this virtue doth gain favour from God now, and Eternal Life in the time to come. He was very good and pitiful in feeding the poor, particularly such as desired to serve God; and when some said that they got but little by begging in the streets, he marvelled that many rich men were so churlish and did not give liberally to the poor although without much loss to themselves they might practise works of mercy, and receive exceeding great rewards from God.

(7) One day therefore he and another who was chosen to be his companion disguised themselves as beggars and went forth, when it was already late in the day, to beg bread, wishing to prove the truth of what these poor men had said. And John Ketel cried before the doors and said, "Give somewhat for God's Sake to a poor stranger who would fain be in Jerusalem." By this he meant not that Jerusalem on earth which slew Christ and the Prophets, but the Fatherland Above whose inhabitants are the Saints and Angels of God; for that country the poor stranger John did sigh, being for the time far off in the body from the Heavenly Jerusalem, though in his soul he drew nearer to Her every day. Now a certain Clerk who was in his house, hearing this cry, arose quickly to open the door and know who this stranger might be, and running after him he asked, saying, "Who art thou that dost make this petition"? But John held his peace for he would not be known, but afterward yielding to that other's importunity, he said, "It is I," and the Clerk knowing his voice answered "Art thou John Ketel? and now dost thou beg thy bread? what is the cause hereof?" John therefore said to him, "Hold thy peace and question me no further upon the matter for the cause is pious and good." So the Clerk returned to his house and told it to them of his household, saying, "Very marvellous is the sight that I have seen. John Ketel, the cook of Florentius' house, doth beg bread from door to door." And his hearers marvelled, and signed themselves with the sign of the Cross, saying, "What doth that good man mean?" and thus communing with one another, they were greatly edified by the example of John and privately told this which he had done to certain others. But John returned to the house, and most joyfully carried into the kitchen the broken meats which had been given him as alms, and showed to Florentius and the Brothers the blessing he had received, namely, the holy bread which he had begged for God's sake. And Florentius rejoiced over the devotion of his

humble cook and said, "Give us a share of thine alms," and John answered: "Gladly will I give you a part hereof to eat; but I would in exchange give some of our own bread to the poor, for they ought not to lose what is their own but rather to receive an increase." Then some of the bread that was begged was put before the Brothers for their meal, and John took some whole loaves from the buttery to give to the poor for God's sake, as was commanded him, and there was great joy in the House over this matter.

(8) One morning he went forth to a place near the Fishgate to draw water from the river, and as he was entering into a boat that belonged to one of the fishers so as to reach the clean water, the owner came up and said, "What doest thou here, get thee gone quickly from my boat." And John bore patiently the words of him that chode him, and gave up his design to draw water lest he might offend the man. But then the fisher saw that John was an holy Brother and was about to depart without a word, so being moved with compassion he said, "Come hither to me and give me thy pitcher." Then he drew water and gave John the pitcher again saying, "Go in peace," and John returned thanks to his benefactor, and carried back the pitcher full of water, praying devoutly upon the way, for this was ever his custom when he went forth upon any business.

(9) Florentius knowing that John was a virtuous man and strong in spirit to bear adversity often chode him for negligence, and blamed him for matters in which he was not really blameworthy. And this Florentius did to prove his patience and to set him up as a pattern for others.

Thus when there were men knocking at the window of the kitchen, and others standing at the door John hastened to answer each one severally according to his proper need: and as he was running hither and thither Florentius knocked upon the table with his hand as if he had need of something; but John being fully occupied delayed a little to answer; so the good Father said with a serious air to prove him, "How long shall I sit here waiting for thee?" to which the good cook replied meekly, "My most beloved Master here am I and will bring thee what thou wilt; I pray thee pardon my tardiness." Sometimes also Florentius said to him, "How is it that this food hath such an ill savour, knowest thou not how to cook better? Mayhap the Brothers will murmur because they must eat thine ill-dressed food." But John listening patiently to the rebuke, and confessing himself

negligent replied, “I will gladly amend myself,” and Florentius answered, “Thou dost often say so, yet thou dost make too small improvement.”

(10) At another time as Florentius was passing through the kitchen John came behind him and kneeling down took hold on the hem of his garment, asking pardon; and Florentius, looking down upon him said: “What is it now?” and John answered, “I have spilled some wine from a cask in the cellar”; then said Florentius yet more sternly, “It is thus that thou dost waste our substance, now breaking something, now spilling something else,” and straightway he turned away his face and shut the kitchen door, leaving the cook upon his knees; but John bearing all humbly arose from the ground making no complaint of this treatment as though he had suffered injury, but holding the holy Father who had chidden him for his good in the highest esteem. In these and in many other ways Florentius often proved John, and yet he loved him with an especial love and honoured him with all his heart for his faithfulness and love of poverty, a matter whereon the two did oft hold commune in the kitchen.

Though he had no great knowledge of letters, yet had he a good ability to understand the Scriptures, knowledge to discern prudently between vice and virtue, and to give effectual remedies to the troubled and the tempted.

(11) When he had leisure from his toil he rejoiced to read in some holy book, not so as to become more learned in the knowledge that puffeth up, but so as to return to his work more fervent in charity. He listened with diligence to the reading at table, for he gathered much from few words, and his virtue of obedience and frequent meditations upon the benefits that God had given him supplied that which the deep sayings of a discourse in Latin denied to him: wherefore he studied lovingly the life of our Lord Jesus Christ, drawing therefrom a rule for every part of his own life; and for His love he embraced the lowest calling, coarser food and poorer clothing.

Sometimes he read the book of John Climacus, “On perfect renunciation of the world and mortification of the Will,” and expounded therefrom sentiments full of spiritual truth, so that wise men marvelled that he had so good an understanding of the book.

(12) A few days before his death he was asked to say whether he knew of aught in the house that should be amended, because the Brethren would gladly amend themselves, and he made answer as a true lover of poverty, saying, “I would desire that we should amend in three things. First, that we

should eat more sparingly and that more should be given to the poor; secondly, that our more precious ornaments should be sold and the price thereof be bestowed in like manner; thirdly, that since we have many books some of these should be sold, and only those that are necessary retained, and that by this means the poor should be the better relieved.”

To these words Florentius, rejoicing over his devotion and his compassionate spirit, replied, “John, that which thou sayest is very good.”

While he was sick certain poor clerks came to visit him, and looking upon them with eyes full of pity, he said, “Oh! my beloved poor, henceforward I shall not be able to give you anything, but I commend you to God that He may provide for you in every good thing.” Amongst his other exercises in humility he had the following custom: on every Sabbath he would clothe him in a long linen robe or shroud to remind him of death and in this garment he would cook on that day. Moreover, he earnestly entreated that he might be buried therein after his death, and this was done, for Matthias of Mecklin who was his comrade, let wash this robe that John might be buried in it even as he had desired. So when the time drew near that this John, our cook and God’s servant, who was filled with many a fruit of virtue, should depart from this life, he fell sick just before the octave of the Feast of Pentecost, being smitten with an imposthume, and began to set himself in order for his approaching departure.

(13) But before his weakness grew upon him, he of his obedience and charity, began once more to take charge of poor clerks and the sick, being desirous to visit them and to provide carefully for their necessities, which thing did yet further increase his desert. But herein he was prevented by his weakness, and he was wondrously consoled by the sweetness of the Presence of Christ Who visited him. For one day Amilius, who faithfully attended him in his sickness and ministered continually to him, came very early in the morning to visit him, asking whether he wished for aught; and then John assenting thereto he went into the church to hear Mass. But when the service was ended he returned to the sick man who asked him, “Wilt thou of thy charity share with me the benefits of the Mass which thou hast heard”; and Amilius answered, “Gladly do I give and assign all to thee in charity, dear Brother,” to which John replied, “My Brother, whilst thou wert gone our Lord Jesus Christ hath deigned to visit me,” and Amilius hearing this said, “Tell me, I pray, when did He depart?” and John answered, “The

moment thou didst open the door He vanished.” So Amilius rejoiced and blessed God, giving Him thanks, and afterward he told me fully all that was done.

(14) Satan also strove to deceive and affright the servant of God, saying thus to him, “Take thy purse again, foul merchant! Thinkest thou that thou canst buy the Kingdom of Heaven with thy money?” But the humble John, understanding the malice of the enemy, said secretly in his heart, “I presume not to rely upon mine own merits, but upon the mercy of God and the merits of the saints.” And so the enemy was put utterly to confusion and departed from him, and John did commit himself in faith to the Divine mercy; and being a faithful servant of Christ turned himself yet more closely to prayer, and ruminated upon these words amongst other songs of psalmody, “The Lord looseth them that are fettered, the Lord enlighteneth the blind.” Amilius, who sat by his pallet, bowed down his ear to hear something more from the lips of one that was in the very agony of death, that he might record the same as a good memorial of him; but he could understand nothing because of the hoarseness of the weak voice.

(15) At length after a long death agony wherein he strove laboriously against the might of death, he breathed forth the breath of his life amid the devout prayers of the Brothers who had come together, and so made a blessed end of a life completed in the service of Christ. He died in the year of the Lord 1398, on the fourth Sunday after Pentecost, which day was the Feast of St. Petronilla the Virgin. His poor body was buried in the cemetery pertaining to St. Lebuin’s Church, where also divers Brethren who died after him rest in peace, to be raised again through Christ upon the Last Day, together with all the faithful. Praise and glory be to Christ for a man so devout as was this humble cook, who, after a short course of years and but little toil, had allotted to him in heaven, as we piously believe, the greatest of rewards. Concerning him the venerable Father John Huesden, Prior at Windesheim, has borne worthy testimony, saying, “Would that it might be my lot to live with such a man and to die in like state even as he died!”

Here beginneth the Book of the devout exercises of this same Brother John

(16) What can I render to Thee, O God Eternal, for all the benefits that thou hast rendered unto me?

O! my beloved John, have pity upon thyself, and with much diligence and all thy strength ponder over thy past life; think what thou wert in thy worldly days, nay, what thou art even yet and what are thy deserts. Think upon the inestimable goodness of our Beloved Lord Jesus Christ which He hath shown in fuller measure to thee than to so many; remember, therefore, that His judgement shall be more heavy upon thee than upon those others, except thou amend thyself. Stand in awe and think that though in His so great kindness He hath spared thee, yet perhaps He may not will to spare thee any longer. Keep in thine heart this thought that to-day—or at furthest to-morrow—thou must die, and then whither shalt thou go?

(17) Woe is me, oh God Eternal! whither shall I flee from the face of Thy wrath, for my sins are more in number than the sands of the sea; yet know I in very truth that nought is so displeasing to Thee as despair, and that Thou desirest not the death of a sinner but his repentance.

For this cause, say unto God with groaning of heart: “Oh! immeasurable goodness of God, look upon me a miserable sinner; oh! mercy all embracing turn Thee unto me that am a man full of iniquity.” Behold! I that am desolate, come to the Almighty; wounded I haste to the Physician.

“O Thou Who hast stayed so long the sword of vengeance, continue Thine accustomed goodness, and according to the multitude of Thy mercies blot out the count of mine offences.”

There are also many other thoughts upon which thou mayest ponder concerning the mercy of God, as His mercy to David, St. Peter, St. Paul, Mary Magdalene, the Publicans, and many other sinners. For it is clearly manifest throughout the whole life of Christ, how pitiful He was to penitents who came to Him; and in regard to them He weighed not the multitude of their sins but the greatness of their love. (18) Wherefore, if I would reach that love, then it is above all things necessary for me to consider mine own frailty, and truly to feel that I can do no good thing of myself. Likewise I must keep the greatness of God and His faithfulness continually before mine eyes, together with mine own littleness and unfaithfulness towards Him. In this there are many things to be considered, and if I give right heed to them the consideration thereof shall lead me to make myself subject to all men, to despise myself even as also I should desire to be despised. But these exercises must be conducted truly and with

careful thought, and one must constantly invoke the help of the Lord from Whom must come the power to perform such exercises.

If therefore I would reach that state of humility and that love, it is needful for me to have a daily exercise and rule to lead me to these things. And so, according as Saints have said, I must look to my past sins, keep them ever before mine eyes and make all endeavour to weigh them. To do this will keep me in subjection and humility, and I shall not think the defects of the Brothers and other men to be heavy, nor shall I judge them lightly, but have compassion upon them, and lead them to better things.

Wherefore it is expedient for me to strive to this end, and to beware of searching curiously into the deeds or words of others; to avoid detraction, and if I hear any such thing to strive to find excuses, putting the matter aside and casting it away.

This also will help me greatly, namely, to consider the virtues of my Brethren, of whom I believe that the greater number have never committed mortal sin. On the other hand, I must think upon the greatness of mine own sins, so shall I find that I am not worthy to live amongst the Brethren nor to serve them, and I must hold them in reverence and hope that through their good works and prayers I may reach Life Eternal.

Likewise it is needful for me to have the Presence of God before mine eyes at all times, and daily to strive inwardly to have good thoughts during my work, and in everything to imitate with a single heart that most worthy Pattern, namely, the Life of our Lord Jesus Christ, His humility, His patience, His contempt of the world and poverty, but, above all, His charity.

Also, I must strive greatly to look upon every man as the image of God and so to deal with all my work as if I were doing it unto Christ; this will greatly lighten my toil and make me benevolent to everyone.

I will strive also to recite my prayers attentively without haste, often in my work and labour to bow my knee, and pray awhile briefly but with attention.

Every morning at the third hour when thou hearest the bell, thou oughtest to rise without delay and straightway begin to meditate upon some holy subject, giving thanks for the mercy of God; remember thine own misery, and that God, the Angels, and the Saints are there with thee.

Be careful what thou readest and with whom thou dost converse.

Kneel down or sit decorously without accidie or leaning to one side or the other, and always bear thyself thus when thou dost pray.

When Mattins or Prime are over, read the Holy Scripture, and if thou art heavy with sleep write down something from the subject of thy study. When the fifth hour doth sound do whatsoever thou hast to do in the kitchen, and if there is nothing there, shut up the kitchen and bind some books, or if anything hath been committed to thee, do it until it is time to go into the kitchen.

When the bell doth ring for Mass, read the first part of Tierce as far as the Psalms while thou art still in the House, and continue to read the remainder on thy way as thou goest to Church. Kneel upright upon thy knees in Church in some corner during the whole of Mass; and after thy usual custom meditate upon the Life and Passion of our Beloved Lord Jesus Christ.

When Mass is done begin whilst thou art still in Church to read Sext as far as the Psalms, and read the rest upon thy homeward way. When thou hast returned to the kitchen from Church pray awhile, determine in thine heart how thou wouldest order thyself during the day, and what are the points in which thou oughtest to amend thyself; then strive steadfastly to this end, keeping before thine eyes (as was said before) that Divine Mirror of the Life and Character of our beloved Lord, and remembering that it is to Him and not to men that thou art ministering.

In the midst of thy work and labour thou oughtest to say often and attentively some brief prayer upon thy bended knees, especially at the ringing of the Bell, and when the signal soundeth in the Church to announce the Elevation of the Holy Body of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Constantly constrain thyself in the midst of thy work to have some good thought, as, for example, the benefits of God, the Kingdom of Heaven, the Judgement, or Death: and when anyone doth knock at the kitchen door look to it that thou give a good answer.

If thou hast time study awhile in the book of extracts which thou hast copied.

Whomsoever of the Brothers thou seest either within or outside the House, look upon him as upon Christ, having special regard for those who have the care of the House, and if they require aught of thee do it quickly and with a cheerful countenance.

Before beginning a meal read the Benedicite, and during thy meal be instant to read or to meditate upon something that is good.

Take heed lest thou eat too hastily, or partake of delicate meats or drinks; be not longer at the table than are the Brethren, and during the meal, if any one of those who serve the table doth knock at the door, arise quickly. After the meal thou must provide for the Reader the hot victual like that which the Brothers have had. Meanwhile, read the Grace and put away the remnants of the food, and the cooking vessels each in his own place, as quickly as thou canst. When thou comest to thy cell after dinner, immediately read Nones and then do thy work and labour with the lay Brothers until the second bell for Vespers, unless thou hast some other duty in the House or abroad. After this read thy Vespers. If thou hast further time to spend meditate upon or study some holy subject until the fourth hour, and then go to the kitchen to prepare supper for the Brothers; after this meal prepare for the following day such food as the sick or the Brethren may require. When thy business in the kitchen is done go to thy cell and read Compline, after which thou mayest study or do any good thing until the eighth hour, at which time thou oughtest to write down thy failures and to meditate piously upon some holy matter, to say some prayer with invocation of the Saints, and having such thoughts in mind to go to bed about the ninth hour endeavouring to fall asleep while yet meditating upon holy things.

When thou dost awake let thy thoughts dwell straightway upon some holy matter, that thou mayst be able to sleep again with such things still in mind.

Before all these things I ought to prefer obedience; and it is my desire, whatsoever the rulers of the House may order (though their decision agree not with mine own ideas) to abandon mine own will without hesitation in these matters, to do at once whatsoever they desire, and not to hold to anything or to any task with inordinate affection; for if I abstain from so doing I shall the more easily abandon mine own will.

Furthermore I ought to strive to hold in reverence and honour those who are the Guardians and Procurators of the House: to take all heed not to harbour harsh thoughts and suspicions of them, to perform dutifully and without reserve all that they desire, not judging or seeking to inquire the reasons for which they order this or that; to keep mine own foolishness

clearly before mine eyes, remembering that I am not wise, and to think their wisdom great.

Of a surety also I must keep before mine eyes the fact that I have resigned myself to these Superiors as being in the place of God, and so am not mine own, although I have bound myself to this obedience not by vow but of my own free and untrammelled will and purpose, and this have I done in the hope that it is wholesome for me so to stand rather than to act according to mine own judgement and pleasure; therefore I desire to think upon this purpose of mine, and earnestly to entreat my Superiors to keep me in subjection.

Moreover I must strive in all my works, words, and thoughts to fear God rather than man, that whatsoever I do it may be solely to the honour of God and to please Him only; in like manner whatever trespass I commit I must fear therein the offence I give to God more than that I give to men. In very truth I must keep myself from boasting, from the desire of outward show and from the love of praise from men.

(19) Also I must strive mightily to keep silence, for this shall be a notable aid to many virtues. I will strive when I speak to do so prudently; to say one “Ave Maria” in the interval before I speak, or reply; not to exaggerate: to avoid loose talk and the use of many or high-sounding words, especially in the kitchen; and to be careful to admonish others in this regard.

I must earnestly endeavour to be alone whenever I can, to put on my spiritual armour, never to be idle on any account, and to avoid speaking or listening to defamatory talk. In the office assigned to thee be diligent to preserve the outward appearance of order; be obedient in the performance of thy duties and show thyself to be kindly to every man, especially by providing food for the sick, particularly for our Father Florentius, who is almost always weak and sickly. I resolve to be benevolent to all strangers, receiving them as I would Christ, but not talking much with them; to look well to the care of the poor, and to do all that is entrusted to me so far as in me lies, namely, to hold them in reverence, to show them kindness, and to keep ward faithfully over the goods entrusted to me.

(20) When I go abroad on business I will strive to keep watch over mine eyes, to read some good book or to meditate while in the streets, and to return homeward as quickly as may be. Also I will endeavour to make known my temptations; and at least once in the week to lament over my

sins to some one person, to accept the remedies that he proposeth, rejecting none, and to endeavour always to admit my guilt; and if I break anything, or neglect any duty, I desire to ask pardon therefore freely.

Also I would abstain from too often tasting the food before it is sent up, save in case of need; from drinking (save at meal times) without leave from my Superiors; and from doing anything behind their backs that I would not dare to do before their faces.

I ought to strive earnestly to perform all despised and humble tasks and to relieve our Brothers Matthew and John thereof whenever I can do so, to hold them in reverence, to show myself kindly to them and prompt to aid in every humble task.

(21) I will beware that no complaint be heard from me of my clothing, my food, and the like; but I will strive rather to feel that I am unworthy of those things which I lack; it is my duty also to read diligently such books as may help me to this end, to give my whole attention to the attainment thereof, to strive to order myself modestly, whether I am walking, standing, sitting, or the like.

It is also profitable to me to esteem the spiritual exercises of this House more highly than those of other Houses, to have a great love for my work in the kitchen, a full resolve to die in this condition, and not to depart from it by reason of anything that may come to me save only in virtue of the rule of obedience.

In this I must have all confidence towards our most loving Lord, namely that He is ready to forgive all my sins, and to give me freely mine own proper reward for everything I do, however small it be.

And though there are many other tasks greater and holier, yet I must not leave mine own work, but remain constant thereunto, being assured that for me no task is more wholesome or more profitable than that to which the Lord hath called me.

Besides these things it is my desire to examine myself daily after the eighth hour in all matters of this kind, to ascertain that in which I have trespassed, and (as I hope), to resolve firmly to amend myself surely therein for the time to come.

LIFE OF ARNOLD OF SCHOONHOVEN

Concerning Arnold of “Schoonhoven” (that is, “Bellœ Curiaë”), a devout Clerk

(1) IN the days when the Church at Deventer flourished through the presence there of that Reverend Father Florentius, and many scholars came to that city from divers regions desiring to be taught, there came also from the country of Holland a youth whose natural disposition was good, and in whom was no worldly malice. His name was Arnold, and he was the son of one Wyrone, a faithful man and an honourable citizen of Schoonhoven. While Arnold was still in his parent’s house, and attended the School with the boys that were his comrades, he followed not the ways of those that sported in the streets, but it was his custom to enter the Church in the morning and there to offer his prayers and vows to God before the several Altars, giving up his heart betimes in the day to the Lord Who made him. The first beginnings of a boyhood so devout contained the promise of that fuller grace which he should earn when he came to man’s estate; for God shielded him that he continued untouched by the contagion of the flesh. As I have said, he came to Deventer, where at that time Master John Boheme was in authority, and he presented himself before the face of Florentius, hoping to obtain a lodging in one of the Houses of the Devout Clerks. At that time there was no small number of these Clerks living in the several Houses under the rule and discipline of that most devout Father, and following the holy commandments of their Lord, His counsels and precepts, and also at set times toiling at the work of copying books for the Schools.

(2) So Florentius, perceiving that Arnold was earnestly disposed to the service of God and wholly turned away from the world, gave him leave to abide in his own ancient House wherein dwelt divers Clerks, about twenty in all, living at the common charge, having a common table and expenditure, and serving God with great devotion. Amongst their number were three lay Brothers, of whom one was the Procurator, who bought all

things necessary for the Community, the second was over the kitchen, and the third mended the clothes. In after days some of the Brethren from this House passed into the order of Canons Regular; others attained the Priestly rank, and by reason of the good examples which they had seen and learned at Deventer, bore fruit in other places.

(3) At this same time, by the aid and counsel of Florentius, I also took up my abode in this house, and continued in the Community for about a year, having Arnold as my companion, for we were content to share one little cell and bed. Here indeed I learned to write, to read the Holy Scripture and books on moral subjects, and to hear devout discourses; but it was chiefly through the sweet conversation of the Brethren that I was inspired yet more strongly to despise the world; and by the pious admonitions of Arnold I was holpen and instructed every day. All that I was then able to earn by writing I gave for the expenses of the Community, and what I lacked, the generous piety of my beloved Father Florentius defrayed for me, for he succoured me in every way like a father.

(4) Thus I noted in Arnold many signs of devotion, for he was altogether exemplary and devout both in the House and the School, not hurtful or harsh to any, but acceptable and kindly unto all. Every morning at the fourth hour when the Bell gave warning, he awoke instantly and arose with alacrity, and then, before the bed on bended knees, he said a short prayer, fervently pouring forth the first fruits of his mouth to the Lord. After dressing himself quickly, he went in due time to the Oratory to recite the morning Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary and of the Holy Cross, and he did not keep the others waiting but was instant to arrive before them all.

When it was time to go to Mass he hastened to be amongst the first in Church and humbly bowed the knee before the Altars, hearing the Office of the Mass with the reverence of a suppliant, and ceasing not from prayer and holy meditation until the solemn rites were finished in due order. He loved to choose a private place far from the crowd so that he might not be hindered in his prayers, and the more private his place the more fervent were his supplications. He avoided to be seen of men lest in any way he might become conspicuous by his devotion, and likewise he took care that his voice might not be heard abroad, for his desire was to open his heart in private prayer to God only; but yet his burning light could not always be

thus hidden nor hindered from shining abroad though he were fain to hide it.

(5) Thus it sometimes happened that though he wist not of it, I stood by and noted secretly what he did, and was set on fire by his fervour in prayer, for I desired that I too might sometimes feel a devotion like to that which he seemed to feel every day. Nor was it wonderful that one who kept careful ward over his heart and lips wherever he went, should be devout in prayer, for the sound of joy was heard from his mouth by reason of the most sweet savour of his devotion, as if he were partaking of delectable food, according to that saying of the Psalmist: "The high praises of God shall be in their lips." As he sat with the boys in School he noted not their childish clamour, but as the Master delivered his lecture he wrote the same on paper and afterward read it over to himself or with a comrade, thereby avoiding vain talk; for he did not betake himself to worldly employments, but when the lectures were done he read awhile in the Holy Page, and often prayed silently or sighed inwardly; for in his studies he sought God above all else. When he found aught that was especially noteworthy, he of his charity showed it to the comrade who was with him or gave him the passage to read, and thus by the Sacred word and by his holy discourse he turned many away from scurrilous talk and laughter. On Feast Days when many persons came to the town, he brought not a few to the House of Florentius to hear his discourse, not regarding their age or condition, but rejoicing over them and hoping for the conversion of some; and through the inspiration of God he was not disappointed of his desire, for he saw the fruit of his labours in the amending of the lives of these worldlings, both young and old. His discourse and exhortation dealt not with lofty matters nor with things foreign to the purpose in hand, but with true conversion to God and the amendment of life in the world; and the holy simplicity of his devout words was more profitable than the subtlety of a Latin discourse.

(6) When he seemed to be sufficiently advanced in learning he occupied himself wholly with spiritual studies, deserting those of the Schools; he forgot his parents, his home, and his country for the sake of Life Eternal, and submitted himself most readily to the yoke of obedience and to the discipline of the Clerks, as was the laudable custom first instituted by our Father Florentius in that ancient House. He toiled not greatly to attain much learning, but rather to preserve a good conscience and purity of heart, for he

knew that the pure in heart are blessed and most pleasing to God. He began to be instant and earnest in his prayers to be allowed to abide all the days of his life in the House of Florentius, for there was no other state of life in the whole world that he would choose save that in which he could pass his days with the Brothers who were so devout and worthy to be accepted of God, beneath a strict rule and in obedience to the most reverend Father of the House. At this time those disciples and most devout pupils of our beloved Father Florentius, whose lives I have written above, were still in the flesh, namely, Lubert, Henry, Gerard, Amilius, James and John Ketel, and there were with them some others who had been amongst the first members of that Community. These were fervent in the love of Christ, and let their light shine as an ensample to their neighbours, and the beloved Brother Arnold desired to be knit to them in humble fellowship and sincerity of life, for he knew that his should be a happy fortune if he should be thought worthy to spend the whole space of his mortal life with these Florentian Brothers that lived the life of Chastity on earth. But though he was importunate in his prayers Florentius delayed to grant his petition so that he might have a better probation, and he spake to him in this wise: "Learn to write well and then there may be hope for thee."

(7) Hearing this he expended all diligence in learning the art of writing, and often went to some skilful writer, asking to be more fully instructed by him; and he said to me: "Would that I could write well that I might the sooner dwell with our Father Florentius! I believe that through God's grace I should have a good will to overcome my passions if only I knew how to write." When I heard this I marvelled at his righteousness and fervour, in that he endeavoured with all his might to do what Florentius had bidden him, and I transposed his saying and thought in my heart: "I should have a good will to learn writing if only I could amend my life."

But Arnold had a special grace from God which instructed him in every good work so that no matter of obedience seemed hard to him, and this grace he strove to nurture with holy exercises and to preserve with anxious prayer lest it might be imputed to him that he had received God's grace in vain. Therefore, before he read or began to write, he said a short prayer making his work an offering to God, and at the end thereof he did the same, returning thanks to Him. When he went forth from the House or returned to

his cell, he bowed the knee before the Image of Christ, and so with prayer and obeisance he went about his business.

(8) Every hour when the Bell rang he said an Ave Maria or some similar invocation, and while he was still attending School, if he saw the door of the Church open before or after school-time, he gladly entered and remained there so long as time allowed, or at least made a reverence toward the Church. The pious customs that were enjoined by his Elders he carefully observed and did not knowingly omit even the least of them. He accepted the admonitions given him with gratitude, be the matter never so slight, and earnestly strove to amend. He received every word spoken by the Superior or his vicar as humbly as if he had heard the same from the mouth of God, or of some Saint, but he ventured not to discriminate or judge by interpreting the order otherwise than as it was given. For these things' sake he had great peace of heart and was dear alike to God and man, being willing and ready to do all that was commanded him as one that rejoiceth ever in the Lord.

(9) Before the Festivals of Christ and the Saints he was instant and zealous to prepare himself for the Holy Communion, and he used to say: "A great Feast is at hand, therefore let us prepare ourselves devoutly to receive the Lord"; or, again: "To-day is the Feast of such a Saint, let us earnestly implore his suffrages."

(10) When a certain youth was speaking with Florentius of the vice of vainglory and asking for a remedy therefor, Arnold, who was passing by, came upon them, and Florentius seeing him said to the youth: "What sayest thou of that Brother yonder? Is he also vainglorious?" To which the youth answered: "I trow not"; and Florentius said: "I wit well that it is as thou sayest."

So when the fulfilment of his desire had been delayed for about a year, and having been proved sufficiently, he had still continued constant, longing with all his heart to be allowed to join the Brotherhood, Florentius yielded to his petition and accepted him, giving him a place amid the Brethren; this was a thing most joyful to him, and he returned hearty thanks to God therefor. Then as though he were converted anew and called to a more perfect state, he strove so zealously after an earnest and humble conversation, as to become to all a pattern of virtue and utter subjection; he let slip no whit of that primitive devotion and those good customs which

were handed down to him by the former Brethren of the House; he apprehended the discipline with all his heart, exercising himself in virtue and daily renewing himself therein according to the saying of the Apostle: “Be renewed in the spirit of your mind.” He shook off all sluggishness from him, being ever ready to watch and pray, diligent in his writing and in admonishing the negligent piously and with charity, being led thereto by godly zeal.

(11) There seemed to dwell in him no will other than that of his Superior whose deeds and words he magnified, and embraced humbly, as if they proceeded from heaven, and thus he continued like an innocent child in obedience and subjection, not in his youth only but unto his life’s end. He shewed his lowliness and modesty in his outward apparel as well as in his speech and conduct, and if he perceived that anyone went beyond the established usage or fell short thereof, he always strove to persuade him to choose the better part.

For himself he chose the lowest place unfeignedly and of set purpose, and just as the bearing of humiliation is a burden to some, so his burden was the finding of humiliations to inflict upon himself.

Amid the Brothers he was cheerful but not frivolous, nor was he given to much talking but put a guard over his mouth and uttered only words tending to edification, for he was more ready to hear than to teach.

In his labour he was faithful and earnest, and was grieved if he could not always rise up in the night and help the Brothers in their brewing. Before the hour for writing he would prepare his pens so that he might be the less hindered from his work and the more promote the common good.

(12) He strove so to order his doings that the Brethren might not be burdened by him, but that he might rather bring in something to their profit; and therefore in his anxiety to avoid so far as possible consuming the fruit of their labours he gladly performed his share of the common labour, and also tasks beyond these. Moreover he rejoiced that if aught was lacking in the gains that he earned by writing this was supplied by his father after the flesh who used to send year by year a certain sum of money to the Brethren. After the death of his parents he would have given gladly all the inheritance which fell to him for the use of the Community, but in this purpose he was hindered by death, which was beforehand with him. For when he was purposed to go to Holland to settle the affairs of his inheritance, he came to

Zutphen, to the Brethren who were then sojourning there, and after a few days he fell sick just after the Feast of St. Philip and St. James, wherefore his journey to his native land was deferred lest haply his end might come when he was far from the fellowship of the Brethren.

(13) Though he felt that his weakness was growing more and more upon him yet he lay not long upon his bed, for upon the Day of St. Wyrone the Bishop—which was the last save one of his life—he himself made his own bed, and on the following day, that is on the Feast of St. Gengulphus the Martyr, about the hour of Vespers, having settled his affairs, he received the Communion of the Holy Body of Christ and the Unction. But late in the evening, feeling himself very weak, he desired that the Brethren should come together to him, and to them he devoutly commended himself, begging them to pray faithfully for him and to report his death to a certain devout Virgin at Schiedam, named Lydewy, who had promised to pray for him, for he had once visited her in Holland, and many wondrous things are told of her by reason of her long suffering patience.

Having made these requests he lay until the tenth hour when the day was closing, continuing sound in mind, and he showed no sadness when he came to the last hour but said he was ready. Then, his Brethren being present and praying round him, he rendered up his soul without much pain, as it would seem. He had lived amongst the Devout Brothers from his youth up, in a good conscience, being a true worshipper of God and a devout lover of Christ, and had persevered for thirty-one years in the Community in the humble condition of a Clerk.

This sweet and amiable Brother died in the year of the Lord 1430, on the ninth day of May, in the City of Zutphen in Gelders, and was buried in the Cemetery of the Blessed Virgin Mary toward the South side of the Church.

Novice

(14) Hearing the lives of these men I am constrained to despise mine own, for thereby I see how far I am from the true virtue.

But yet I hope that it is profitable to me to have learned this from thy narration, for I purpose from my heart to amend myself.

The Elder Brother

For this purpose I have told these things to thee, though briefly, that thou mayest make it thy study to give thyself to fervency of spirit, nor ever

aspire to any dignity or honourable office, but mayest rather labour to be altogether in subjection and to root out thy vices.

So shalt thou be able the more fully to please God Who doth ever grant a special grace of devotion to the humble, and after the toil of this present life glory for ever and ever to them that have fought a good fight.

AMEN.

THE IMITATION OF CHRIST

THOMAS A KEMPIS

E-BOOK ALSO AVAILABLE IN PAPERBACK.

TRANSLATED FROM THE LATIN INTO MODERN ENGLISH
BY ALOYSIUS CROFT AND HAROLD BOLTON

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AND WITHOUT FIGHTING, NO VICTORY”

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CONTENTS

THE IMITATION OF CHRIST

BOOK ONE

Thoughts Helpful In The Life Of The Soul

The First Chapter

Imitating Christ and Despising All Vanities on Earth

The Second Chapter

Having a Humble Opinion of Self

The Third Chapter

The Doctrine of Truth

The Fourth Chapter

Prudence in Action

The Fifth Chapter

Reading the Holy Scripture

The Sixth Chapter

Unbridled Affections

The Seventh Chapter

Avoiding False Hope and Pride

The Eighth Chapter

Shunning Over-Familiarity

The Ninth Chapter

Obedience and Subjection

The Tenth Chapter

Avoiding Idle Talk

The Eleventh Chapter

Acquiring Peace and Zeal for Perfection

The Twelfth Chapter

The Value of Adversity

[The Thirteenth Chapter](#)
[Resisting Temptation](#)

[The Fourteenth Chapter](#)
[Avoiding Rash Judgment](#)

[The Fifteenth Chapter](#)
[Works Done in Charity](#)

[The Sixteenth Chapter](#)
[Bearing with the Faults of Others](#)

[The Seventeenth Chapter](#)
[Monastic Life](#)

[The Eighteenth Chapter](#)
[The Example Set Us by the Holy Fathers](#)

[The Nineteenth Chapter](#)
[The Practices of a Good Religious](#)

[The Twentieth Chapter](#)
[The Love of Solitude and Silence](#)

[The Twenty-First Chapter](#)
[Sorrow of Heart](#)

[The Twenty-Second Chapter](#)
[Thoughts on the Misery of Man](#)

[The Twenty-Third Chapter](#)
[Thoughts on Death](#)

[The Twenty-Fourth Chapter](#)
[Judgment and the Punishment of Sin](#)

[The Twenty-Fifth Chapter](#)
[Zeal in Amending our Lives](#)

[BOOK TWO](#)
[The Interior Life](#)

[The First Chapter](#)
[Meditation](#)

[The Second Chapter](#)
[Humility](#)

[The Third Chapter](#)
[Goodness and Peace in Man](#)

[The Fourth Chapter](#)
[Purity of Mind and Unity of Purpose](#)

[The Fifth Chapter](#)
[Ourselves](#)

[The Sixth Chapter](#)
[The Joy of a Good Conscience](#)

[The Seventh Chapter](#)
[Loving Jesus Above All Things](#)

[The Eighth Chapter](#)
[The Intimate Friendship of Jesus](#)

[The Ninth Chapter](#)
[Wanting No Share in Comfort](#)

[The Tenth Chapter](#)
[Appreciating God's Grace](#)

[The Eleventh Chapter](#)
[Few Love the Cross of Jesus](#)

[The Twelfth Chapter](#)
[The Royal Road of the Holy Cross](#)

[BOOK THREE](#)
[Internal Consolation](#)

[The First Chapter](#)
[The Inward Conversation of Christ with the Faithful Soul](#)

[The Second Chapter](#)
[Truth Speaks Inwardly Without the Sound of Words](#)

[The Disciple](#)

[The Third Chapter](#)
[Listen Humbly to the Words of God. Many Do Not Heed Them](#)

[The Voice of Christ](#)

[The Disciple](#)

[The Voice of Christ](#)

[The Fourth Chapter](#)
[We Must Walk Before God in Humility and Truth](#)

[The Voice of Christ](#)

[The Disciple](#)

[The Voice of Christ](#)

[The Fifth Chapter](#)

[The Wonderful Effect of Divine Love](#)

[The Disciple](#)

[The Sixth Chapter](#)

[The Proving of a True Lover](#)

[The Voice of Christ](#)

[The Disciple](#)

[The Voice of Christ](#)

[The Seventh Chapter](#)

[Grace Must Be Hidden Under the Mantle of Humility](#)

[The Voice of Christ](#)

[The Eighth Chapter](#)

[Self-Abasement in the Sight of God](#)

[The Disciple](#)

[The Ninth Chapter](#)

[All Things should be Referred to God as their Last End](#)

[The Voice of Christ](#)

[The Tenth Chapter](#)

[To Despise the World and Serve God is Sweet](#)

[The Disciple](#)

[The Eleventh Chapter](#)

[The Longings of our Hearts Must Be Examined And Moderated](#)

[The Voice of Christ](#)

[The Disciple](#)

[The Voice of Christ](#)

[The Twelfth Chapter](#)

[Acquiring Patience in the Fight Against Concupiscence](#)

[The Disciple](#)

[The Voice of Christ](#)

The Thirteenth Chapter

The Obedience of One Humbly Subject to the Example of Jesus Christ

The Voice of Christ

The Fourteenth Chapter

Consider the Hidden Judgments of God Lest You Become Proud of Your Own Good Deeds

The Disciple

The Fifteenth Chapter

How One Should Feel and Speak on Every Desirable Thing

The Voice of Christ

The Sixteenth Chapter

True Comfort Is to Be Sought in God Alone

The Disciple

The Seventeenth Chapter

All Our Care is to Be Placed in God

The Voice of Christ

The Disciple

The Voice of Christ

The Disciple

The Eighteenth Chapter

Temporal Sufferings Should Be Borne Patiently, After the Example of Christ

The Voice of Christ

The Disciple

The Nineteenth Chapter

True Patience in Suffering

The Voice of Christ

The Disciple

The Twentieth Chapter

Confessing Our Weakness in the Miseries of Life

The Disciple

The Twenty-first Chapter

Above All Goods and All Gifts We Must Rest in God

[The Disciple](#)

[The Twenty-Second Chapter](#)

[Remember the Innumerable Gifts of God](#)

[The Disciple](#)

[The Twenty-Third Chapter](#)

[Four Things Which Bring Great Peace](#)

[The Voice of Christ](#)

[The Disciple](#)

[The Twenty-Fourth Chapter](#)

[Avoiding Curious Inquiry About the Lives of Others](#)

[The Voice of Christ](#)

[The Twenty-Fifth Chapter](#)

[The Basis of Firm Peace of Heart and True Progress](#)

[The Voice of Christ](#)

[The Disciple](#)

[The Voice of Christ](#)

[The Disciple](#)

[The Voice of Christ](#)

[The Twenty-Sixth Chapter](#)

[The Excellence of a Free Mind, Gained Through Prayer Rather Than By Study](#)

[The Disciple](#)

[The Twenty-Seventh Chapter](#)

[Self-Love is the Greatest Hindrance to the Highest Good](#)

[The Voice of Christ](#)

[The Twenty-Eighth Chapter](#)

[Strength Against Slander](#)

[The Voice of Christ](#)

[The Twenty-Ninth Chapter](#)

[How We Must Call Upon and Bless the Lord When Trouble Presses](#)

[The Disciple](#)

The Thirtieth Chapter

The Quest of Divine Help and Confidence in Regaining Grace

The Voice of Christ

The Thirty-First Chapter

To Find the Creator, Forsake All Creatures

The Disciple

The Thirty-Second Chapter

Self-Denial and the Renunciation of Evil Appetites

The Voice of Christ

The Disciple

The Voice of Christ

The Thirty-Third Chapter

Restlessness of Soul—Directing Our Final Intention Toward God

The Voice of Christ

The Thirty-Fourth Chapter

God is Sweet Above All Things and in All Things to Those Who Love Him

The Disciple

The Thirty-Fifth Chapter

There is No Security from Temptation in This Life

The Voice of Christ

The Thirty-Sixth Chapter

The Vain Judgments of Men

The Voice of Christ

The Thirty-Seventh Chapter

Pure and Entire Resignation of Self to Obtain Freedom of Heart

The Voice of Christ

The Disciple

The Voice of Christ

The Thirty-Eighth Chapter

The Right Ordering of External Affairs; Recourse to God in Dangers

The Voice of Christ

The Thirty-Ninth Chapter

A Man Should Not Be Unduly Solicitous About His Affairs

The Voice of Christ

The Disciple

The Voice of Christ

The Fortieth Chapter

Man Has No Good in Himself and Can Glory in Nothing

The Disciple

The Forty-First Chapter

Contempt for All Earthly Honor

The Voice of Christ

The Disciple

The Forty-Second Chapter

Peace is Not to Be Placed in Men

The Voice of Christ

The Forty-Third Chapter

Beware Vain and Worldly Knowledge

The Voice of Christ

The Forty-Fourth Chapter

Do Not Be Concerned About Outward Things

The Voice of Christ

The Disciple

The Forty-Fifth Chapter

All Men Are Not to Be Believed, for It Is Easy to Err in Speech

The Disciple

The Forty-Sixth Chapter

Trust in God Against Slander

The Voice of Christ

The Disciple

The Forty-Seventh Chapter

Every Trial Must Be Borne for the Sake of Eternal Life

[The Voice of Christ](#)

[The Forty-Eighth Chapter](#)

[The Day of Eternity and the Distresses of This Life](#)

[The Disciple](#)

[The Forty-Ninth Chapter](#)

[The Desire of Eternal Life; the Great Rewards Promised to Those Who Struggle](#)

[The Voice of Christ](#)

[The Fiftieth Chapter](#)

[How a Desolate Person Ought to Commit Himself Into the Hands of God](#)

[The Disciple](#)

[The Fifty-First Chapter](#)

[When We Cannot Attain to the Highest, We Must Practice the Humble Works](#)

[The Voice of Christ](#)

[The Fifty-Second Chapter](#)

[A Man Ought Not to Consider Himself Worthy of Consolation, But Rather Deserving of Chastisement](#)

[The Disciple](#)

[The Fifty-Third Chapter](#)

[God's Grace Is Not Given to the Earthly Minded](#)

[The Voice of Christ](#)

[The Fifty-Fourth Chapter](#)

[The Different Motions of Nature and Grace](#)

[The Voice of Christ](#)

[The Fifty-Fifth Chapter](#)

[The Corruption of Nature and the Efficacy of Divine Grace](#)

[The Disciple](#)

[The Fifty-Sixth Chapter](#)

[We Ought to Deny Ourselves and Imitate Christ Through Bearing the Cross](#)

[The Voice of Christ](#)

[The Disciple](#)

[The Voice of Christ](#)

[The Disciple](#)

The Fifty-Seventh Chapter

A Man Should Not Be Too Downcast When He Falls Into Defects

The Voice of Christ

The Disciple

The Fifty-Eighth Chapter

High Matters and the Hidden Judgments of God Are Not to Be Scrutinized

The Voice of Christ

The Fifty-Ninth Chapter

All Hope and Trust Are to Be Fixed In God Alone

The Disciple

BOOK FOUR

An Invitation To Holy Communion

The Voice of Christ

The First Chapter

The Great Reverence With Which We Should Receive Christ

The Disciple

The Second Chapter

God's Great Goodness and Love is Shown to Man in This Sacrament

The Disciple

The Third Chapter

It Is Profitable to Receive Communion Often

The Disciple

The Fourth Chapter

Many Blessings Are Given Those Who Receive Communion Worthily

The Disciple

The Fifth Chapter

The Dignity of the Sacrament and of the Priesthood

The Voice of Christ

The Sixth Chapter

An Inquiry on the Proper Thing to Do Before Communion

The Disciple

The Seventh Chapter

The Examination of Conscience and the Resolution to Amend

The Voice of Christ

The Eighth Chapter

The Offering of Christ on the Cross; Our Offering

The Voice of Christ

The Ninth Chapter

We Should Offer Ourselves and All That We Have to God, Praying for All

The Disciple

The Tenth Chapter

Do Not Lightly Forego Holy Communion

The Voice of Christ

The Eleventh Chapter

The Body of Christ and Sacred Scripture Are Most Necessary to a Faithful Soul

The Disciple

The Twelfth Chapter

The Communicant Should Prepare Himself for Christ with Great Care

The Voice of Christ

The Thirteenth Chapter

With All Her Heart the Devout Soul Should Desire Union with Christ in the Sacrament

The Disciple

The Fourteenth Chapter

The Ardent Longing of Devout Men for the Body of Christ

The Disciple

The Fifteenth Chapter

The Grace of Devotion is Acquired Through Humility and Self-Denial

The Voice of Christ

The Sixteenth Chapter

We Should Show Our Needs to Christ and Ask His Grace

The Disciple

The Seventeenth Chapter

The Burning Love and Strong Desire to Receive Christ

The Disciple

The Eighteenth Chapter

Man Should Not Scrutinize This Sacrament in Curiosity, But Humbly Imitate Christ and Submit Reason to Holy Faith

The Voice of Christ

THE IMITATION OF CHRIST

BOOK ONE

Thoughts Helpful In The Life Of The Soul

The First Chapter

Imitating Christ and Despising All Vanities on Earth

“HE WHO follows Me, walks not in darkness,” says the Lord (John 8:12). By these words of Christ we are advised to imitate His life and habits, if we wish to be truly enlightened and free from all blindness of heart. Let our chief effort, therefore, be to study the life of Jesus Christ.

The teaching of Christ is more excellent than all the advice of the saints, and he who has His spirit will find in it a hidden manna. Now, there are many who hear the Gospel often but care little for it because they have not the spirit of Christ. Yet whoever wishes to understand fully the words of Christ must try to pattern his whole life on that of Christ.

What good does it do to speak learnedly about the Trinity if, lacking humility, you displease the Trinity? Indeed it is not learning that makes a man holy and just, but a virtuous life makes him pleasing to God. I would rather feel contrition than know how to define it. For what would it profit us to know the whole Bible by heart and the principles of all the philosophers if we live without grace and the love of God? Vanity of vanities and all is vanity, except to love God and serve Him alone.

This is the greatest wisdom—to seek the kingdom of heaven through contempt of the world. It is vanity, therefore, to seek and trust in riches that perish. It is vanity also to court honor and to be puffed up with pride. It is vanity to follow the lusts of the body and to desire things for which severe punishment later must come. It is vanity to wish for long life and to care little about a well-spent life. It is vanity to be concerned with the present only and not to make provision for things to come. It is vanity to love what passes quickly and not to look ahead where eternal joy abides.

Often recall the proverb: “The eye is not satisfied with seeing nor the ear filled with hearing.” Try, moreover, to turn your heart from the love of things visible and bring yourself to things invisible. For they who follow their own evil passions stain their consciences and lose the grace of God.

The Second Chapter

Having a Humble Opinion of Self

EVERY man naturally desires knowledge ; but what good is knowledge without fear of God? Indeed a humble rustic who serves God is better than a proud intellectual who neglects his soul to study the course of the stars. He who knows himself well becomes mean in his own eyes and is not happy when praised by men.

If I knew all things in the world and had not charity, what would it profit me before God Who will judge me by my deeds?

Shun too great a desire for knowledge, for in it there is much fretting and delusion. Intellectuals like to appear learned and to be called wise. Yet there are many things the knowledge of which does little or no good to the soul, and he who concerns himself about other things than those which lead to salvation is very unwise.

Many words do not satisfy the soul; but a good life eases the mind and a clean conscience inspires great trust in God.

The more you know and the better you understand, the more severely will you be judged, unless your life is also the more holy. Do not be proud, therefore, because of your learning or skill. Rather, fear because of the talent given you. If you think you know many things and understand them well enough, realize at the same time that there is much you do not know. Hence, do not affect wisdom, but admit your ignorance. Why prefer yourself to anyone else when many are more learned, more cultured than you?

If you wish to learn and appreciate something worth while, then love to be unknown and considered as nothing. Truly to know and despise self is the best and most perfect counsel. To think of oneself as nothing, and always to think well and highly of others is the best and most perfect

wisdom. Wherefore, if you see another sin openly or commit a serious crime, do not consider yourself better, for you do not know how long you can remain in good estate. All men are frail, but you must admit that none is more frail than yourself.

The Third Chapter

The Doctrine of Truth

HAPPY is he to whom truth manifests itself, not in signs and words that fade, but as it actually is. Our opinions, our senses often deceive us and we discern very little.

What good is much discussion of involved and obscure matters when our ignorance of them will not be held against us on Judgment Day? Neglect of things which are profitable and necessary and undue concern with those which are irrelevant and harmful, are great folly.

We have eyes and do not see.

What, therefore, have we to do with questions of philosophy? He to whom the Eternal Word speaks is free from theorizing. For from this Word are all things and of Him all things speak—the Beginning Who also speaks to us. Without this Word no man understands or judges aright. He to whom it becomes everything, who traces all things to it and who sees all things in it, may ease his heart and remain at peace with God.

O God, You Who are the truth, make me one with You in love everlasting. I am often wearied by the many things I hear and read, but in You is all that I long for. Let the learned be still, let all creatures be silent before You; You alone speak to me.

The more recollected a man is, and the more simple of heart he becomes, the easier he understands sublime things, for he receives the light of knowledge from above. The pure, simple, and steadfast spirit is not distracted by many labors, for he does them all for the honor of God. And since he enjoys interior peace he seeks no selfish end in anything. What, indeed, gives more trouble and affliction than uncontrolled desires of the heart?

A good and devout man arranges in his mind the things he has to do, not according to the whims of evil inclination but according to the dictates of right reason. Who is forced to struggle more than he who tries to master himself? This ought to be our purpose, then: to conquer self, to become stronger each day, to advance in virtue.

Every perfection in this life has some imperfection mixed with it and no learning of ours is without some darkness. Humble knowledge of self is a surer path to God than the ardent pursuit of learning. Not that learning is to be considered evil, or knowledge, which is good in itself and so ordained by God; but a clean conscience and virtuous life ought always to be preferred. Many often err and accomplish little or nothing because they try to become learned rather than to live well.

If men used as much care in uprooting vices and implanting virtues as they do in discussing problems, there would not be so much evil and scandal in the world, or such laxity in religious organizations. On the day of judgment, surely, we shall not be asked what we have read but what we have done; not how well we have spoken but how well we have lived.

Tell me, where now are all the masters and teachers whom you knew so well in life and who were famous for their learning? Others have already taken their places and I know not whether they ever think of their predecessors. During life they seemed to be something; now they are seldom remembered. How quickly the glory of the world passes away! If only their lives had kept pace with their learning, then their study and reading would have been worth while.

How many there are who perish because of vain worldly knowledge and too little care for serving God. They became vain in their own conceits because they chose to be great rather than humble.

He is truly great who has great charity. He is truly great who is little in his own eyes and makes nothing of the highest honor. He is truly wise who looks upon all earthly things as folly that he may gain Christ. He who does God's will and renounces his own is truly very learned.

The Fourth Chapter

Prudence in Action

DO NOT yield to every impulse and suggestion but consider things carefully and patiently in the light of God's will. For very often, sad to say, we are so weak that we believe and speak evil of others rather than good. Perfect men, however, do not readily believe every talebearer, because they know that human frailty is prone to evil and is likely to appear in speech.

Not to act rashly or to cling obstinately to one's opinion, not to believe everything people say or to spread abroad the gossip one has heard, is great wisdom.

Take counsel with a wise and conscientious man. Seek the advice of your betters in preference to following your own inclinations.

A good life makes a man wise according to God and gives him experience in many things, for the more humble he is and the more subject to God, the wiser and the more at peace he will be in all things.

The Fifth Chapter

Reading the Holy Scripture

TRUTH, not eloquence, is to be sought in reading the Holy Scriptures; and every part must be read in the spirit in which it was written. For in the Scriptures we ought to seek profit rather than polished diction.

Likewise we ought to read simple and devout books as willingly as learned and profound ones. We ought not to be swayed by the authority of the writer, whether he be a great literary light or an insignificant person, but by the love of simple truth. We ought not to ask who is speaking, but mark what is said. Men pass away, but the truth of the Lord remains forever. God speaks to us in many ways without regard for persons.

Our curiosity often impedes our reading of the Scriptures, when we wish to understand and mull over what we ought simply to read and pass by.

If you would profit from it, therefore, read with humility, simplicity, and faith, and never seek a reputation for being learned. Seek willingly and listen attentively to the words of the saints; do not be displeased with the sayings of the ancients, for they were not made without purpose.

The Sixth Chapter

Unbridled Affections

WHEN a man desires a thing too much, he at once becomes ill at ease. A proud and avaricious man never rests, whereas he who is poor and humble of heart lives in a world of peace. An unmortified man is quickly tempted and overcome in small, trifling evils; his spirit is weak, in a measure carnal and inclined to sensual things; he can hardly abstain from earthly desires. Hence it makes him sad to forego them; he is quick to anger if reproofed. Yet if he satisfies his desires, remorse of conscience overwhelms him because he followed his passions and they did not lead to the peace he sought.

True peace of heart, then, is found in resisting passions, not in satisfying them. There is no peace in the carnal man, in the man given to vain attractions, but there is peace in the fervent and spiritual man.

The Seventh Chapter

Avoiding False Hope and Pride

VAIN is the man who puts his trust in men, in created things.

Do not be ashamed to serve others for the love of Jesus Christ and to seem poor in this world. Do not be self-sufficient but place your trust in God. Do what lies in your power and God will aid your good will. Put no trust in your own learning nor in the cunning of any man, but rather in the grace of God Who helps the humble and humbles the proud.

If you have wealth, do not glory in it, nor in friends because they are powerful, but in God Who gives all things and Who desires above all to give Himself. Do not boast of personal stature or of physical beauty, qualities which are marred and destroyed by a little sickness. Do not take pride in your talent or ability, lest you displease God to Whom belongs all the natural gifts that you have.

Do not think yourself better than others lest, perhaps, you be accounted worse before God Who knows what is in man. Do not take pride in your good deeds, for God's judgments differ from those of men and what pleases them often displeases Him. If there is good in you, see more good in others, so that you may remain humble. It does no harm to esteem yourself less than anyone else, but it is very harmful to think yourself better than even one. The humble live in continuous peace, while in the hearts of the proud are envy and frequent anger.

The Eighth Chapter

Shunning Over-Familiarity

DO NOT open your heart to every man, but discuss your affairs with one who is wise and who fears God. Do not keep company with young people and strangers. Do not fawn upon the rich, and do not be fond of mingling with the great. Associate with the humble and the simple, with the devout and virtuous, and with them speak of edifying things. Be not intimate with any woman, but generally commend all good women to God. Seek only the intimacy of God and of His angels, and avoid the notice of men.

We ought to have charity for all men but familiarity with all is not expedient. Sometimes it happens that a person enjoys a good reputation among those who do not know him, but at the same time is held in slight regard by those who do. Frequently we think we are pleasing others by our presence and we begin rather to displease them by the faults they find in us.

The Ninth Chapter

Obedience and Subjection

IT IS a very great thing to obey, to live under a superior and not to be one's own master, for it is much safer to be subject than it is to command. Many live in obedience more from necessity than from love. Such become discontented and dejected on the slightest pretext; they will never gain peace of mind unless they subject themselves wholeheartedly for the love of God.

Go where you may, you will find no rest except in humble obedience to the rule of authority. Dreams of happiness expected from change and different places have deceived many.

Everyone, it is true, wishes to do as he pleases and is attracted to those who agree with him. But if God be among us, we must at times give up our opinions for the blessings of peace.

Furthermore, who is so wise that he can have full knowledge of everything? Do not trust too much in your own opinions, but be willing to listen to those of others. If, though your own be good, you accept another's opinion for love of God, you will gain much more merit; for I have often heard that it is safer to listen to advice and take it than to give it. It may happen, too, that while one's own opinion may be good, refusal to agree with others when reason and occasion demand it, is a sign of pride and obstinacy.

The Tenth Chapter

Avoiding Idle Talk

SHUN the gossip of men as much as possible, for discussion of worldly affairs, even though sincere, is a great distraction inasmuch as we are quickly ensnared and captivated by vanity.

Many a time I wish that I had held my peace and had not associated with men. Why, indeed, do we converse and gossip among ourselves when we so seldom part without a troubled conscience? We do so because we seek comfort from one another's conversation and wish to ease the mind wearied by diverse thoughts. Hence, we talk and think quite fondly of things we like very much or of things we dislike intensely. But, sad to say, we often talk vainly and to no purpose; for this external pleasure effectively bars inward and divine consolation.

Therefore we must watch and pray lest time pass idly.

When the right and opportune moment comes for speaking, say something that will edify.

Bad habits and indifference to spiritual progress do much to remove the guard from the tongue. Devout conversation on spiritual matters, on the contrary, is a great aid to spiritual progress, especially when persons of the same mind and spirit associate together in God.

The Eleventh Chapter

Acquiring Peace and Zeal for Perfection

WE SHOULD enjoy much peace if we did not concern ourselves with what others say and do, for these are no concern of ours. How can a man who meddles in affairs not his own, who seeks strange distractions, and who is little or seldom inwardly recollected, live long in peace?

Blessed are the simple of heart for they shall enjoy peace in abundance.

Why were some of the saints so perfect and so given to contemplation? Because they tried to mortify entirely in themselves all earthly desires, and thus they were able to attach themselves to God with all their heart and freely to concentrate their innermost thoughts.

We are too occupied with our own whims and fancies, too taken up with passing things. Rarely do we completely conquer even one vice, and we are not inflamed with the desire to improve ourselves day by day; hence, we remain cold and indifferent. If we mortified our bodies perfectly and allowed no distractions to enter our minds, we could appreciate divine things and experience something of heavenly contemplation.

The greatest obstacle, indeed, the only obstacle, is that we are not free from passions and lusts, that we do not try to follow the perfect way of the saints. Thus when we encounter some slight difficulty, we are too easily dejected and turn to human consolations. If we tried, however, to stand as brave men in battle, the help of the Lord from heaven would surely sustain us. For He Who gives us the opportunity of fighting for victory, is ready to help those who carry on and trust in His grace.

If we let our progress in religious life depend on the observance of its externals alone, our devotion will quickly come to an end. Let us, then, lay the ax to the root that we may be freed from our passions and thus have peace of mind.

If we were to uproot only one vice each year, we should soon become perfect. The contrary, however, is often the case—we feel that we were better and purer in the first fervor of our conversion than we are after many years in the practice of our faith. Our fervor and progress ought to increase day by day; yet it is now considered noteworthy if a man can retain even a part of his first fervor.

If we did a little violence to ourselves at the start, we should afterwards be able to do all things with ease and joy. It is hard to break old habits, but harder still to go against our will.

If you do not overcome small, trifling things, how will you overcome the more difficult? Resist temptations in the beginning, and unlearn the evil habit lest perhaps, little by little, it lead to a more evil one.

If you but consider what peace a good life will bring to yourself and what joy it will give to others, I think you will be more concerned about your spiritual progress.

The Twelfth Chapter

The Value of Adversity

IT IS good for us to have trials and troubles at times, for they often remind us that we are on probation and ought not to hope in any worldly thing. It is good for us sometimes to suffer contradiction, to be misjudged by men even though we do well and mean well. These things help us to be humble and shield us from vainglory. When to all outward appearances men give us no credit, when they do not think well of us, then we are more inclined to seek God Who sees our hearts. Therefore, a man ought to root himself so firmly in God that he will not need the consolations of men.

When a man of good will is afflicted, tempted, and tormented by evil thoughts, he realizes clearly that his greatest need is God, without Whom he can do no good. Saddened by his miseries and sufferings, he laments and prays. He wearies of living longer and wishes for death that he might be dissolved and be with Christ. Then he understands fully that perfect security and complete peace cannot be found on earth.

The Thirteenth Chapter

Resisting Temptation

SO LONG as we live in this world we cannot escape suffering and temptation. Whence it is written in Job: “The life of man upon earth is a warfare.” Everyone, therefore, must guard against temptation and must watch in prayer lest the devil, who never sleeps but goes about seeking whom he may devour, find occasion to deceive him. No one is so perfect or so holy but he is sometimes tempted; man cannot be altogether free from temptation.

Yet temptations, though troublesome and severe, are often useful to a man, for in them he is humbled, purified, and instructed. The saints all passed through many temptations and trials to profit by them, while those who could not resist became reprobate and fell away. There is no state so holy, no place so secret that temptations and trials will not come. Man is never safe from them as long as he lives, for they come from within us—in sin we were born. When one temptation or trial passes, another comes; we shall always have something to suffer because we have lost the state of original blessedness.

Many people try to escape temptations, only to fall more deeply. We cannot conquer simply by fleeing, but by patience and true humility we become stronger than all our enemies. The man who only shuns temptations outwardly and does not uproot them will make little progress; indeed they will quickly return, more violent than before.

Little by little, in patience and long-suffering you will overcome them, by the help of God rather than by severity and your own rash ways. Often take counsel when tempted; and do not be harsh with others who are tempted, but console them as you yourself would wish to be consoled.

The beginning of all temptation lies in a wavering mind and little trust in God, for as a rudderless ship is driven hither and yon by waves, so a careless and irresolute man is tempted in many ways. Fire tempers iron and temptation steels the just. Often we do not know what we can stand, but temptation shows us what we are.

Above all, we must be especially alert against the beginnings of temptation, for the enemy is more easily conquered if he is refused admittance to the mind and is met beyond the threshold when he knocks.

Someone has said very aptly: "Resist the beginnings; remedies come too late, when by long delay the evil has gained strength." First, a mere thought comes to mind, then strong imagination, followed by pleasure, evil delight, and consent. Thus, because he is not resisted in the beginning, Satan gains full entry. And the longer a man delays in resisting, so much the weaker does he become each day, while the strength of the enemy grows against him.

Some suffer great temptations in the beginning of their conversion, others toward the end, while some are troubled almost constantly throughout their life. Others, again, are tempted but lightly according to the wisdom and justice of Divine Providence Who weighs the status and merit of each and prepares all for the salvation of His elect.

We should not despair, therefore, when we are tempted, but pray to God the more fervently that He may see fit to help us, for according to the word of Paul, He will make issue with temptation that we may be able to bear it. Let us humble our souls under the hand of God in every trial and temptation for He will save and exalt the humble in spirit.

In temptations and trials the progress of a man is measured; in them opportunity for merit and virtue is made more manifest.

When a man is not troubled it is not hard for him to be fervent and devout, but if he bears up patiently in time of adversity, there is hope for great progress.

Some, guarded against great temptations, are frequently overcome by small ones in order that, humbled by their weakness in small trials, they may not presume on their own strength in great ones.

The Fourteenth Chapter

Avoiding Rash Judgment

TURN your attention upon yourself and beware of judging the deeds of other men, for in judging others a man labors vainly, often makes mistakes, and easily sins; whereas, in judging and taking stock of himself he does something that is always profitable.

We frequently judge that things are as we wish them to be, for through personal feeling true perspective is easily lost.

If God were the sole object of our desire, we should not be disturbed so easily by opposition to our opinions. But often something lurks within or happens from without to draw us along with it.

Many, unawares, seek themselves in the things they do. They seem even to enjoy peace of mind when things happen according to their wish and liking, but if otherwise than they desire, they are soon disturbed and saddened. Differences of feeling and opinion often divide friends and acquaintances, even those who are religious and devout.

An old habit is hard to break, and no one is willing to be led farther than he can see.

If you rely more upon your intelligence or industry than upon the virtue of submission to Jesus Christ, you will hardly, and in any case slowly, become an enlightened man. God wants us to be completely subject to Him and, through ardent love, to rise above all human wisdom.

The Fifteenth Chapter

Works Done in Charity

NEVER do evil for anything in the world, or for the love of any man. For one who is in need, however, a good work may at times be purposely left undone or changed for a better one. This is not the omission of a good deed but rather its improvement.

Without charity external work is of no value, but anything done in charity, be it ever so small and trivial, is entirely fruitful inasmuch as God weighs the love with which a man acts rather than the deed itself.

He does much who loves much. He does much who does a thing well. He does well who serves the common good rather than his own interests.

Now, that which seems to be charity is oftentimes really sensuality, for man's own inclination, his own will, his hope of reward, and his self-interest, are motives seldom absent. On the contrary, he who has true and perfect charity seeks self in nothing, but searches all things for the glory of God. Moreover, he envies no man, because he desires no personal pleasure nor does he wish to rejoice in himself; rather he desires the greater glory of God above all things. He ascribes to man nothing that is good but attributes it wholly to God from Whom all things proceed as from a fountain, and in Whom all the blessed shall rest as their last end and fruition.

If man had but a spark of true charity he would surely sense that all the things of earth are full of vanity!

The Sixteenth Chapter

Bearing with the Faults of Others

UNTIL God ordains otherwise, a man ought to bear patiently whatever he cannot correct in himself and in others. Consider it better thus—perhaps to try your patience and to test you, for without such patience and trial your merits are of little account. Nevertheless, under such difficulties you should pray that God will consent to help you bear them calmly.

If, after being admonished once or twice, a person does not amend, do not argue with him but commit the whole matter to God that His will and honor may be furthered in all His servants, for God knows well how to turn evil to good. Try to bear patiently with the defects and infirmities of others, whatever they may be, because you also have many a fault which others must endure.

If you cannot make yourself what you would wish to be, how can you bend others to your will? We want them to be perfect, yet we do not correct our own faults. We wish them to be severely corrected, yet we will not correct ourselves. Their great liberty displeases us, yet we would not be denied what we ask. We would have them bound by laws, yet we will allow ourselves to be restrained in nothing. Hence, it is clear how seldom we think of others as we do of ourselves.

If all were perfect, what should we have to suffer from others for God's sake? But God has so ordained, that we may learn to bear with one another's burdens, for there is no man without fault, no man without burden, no man sufficient to himself nor wise enough. Hence we must support one another, console one another, mutually help, counsel, and advise, for the measure of every man's virtue is best revealed in time of adversity—adversity that does not weaken a man but rather shows what he is.

The Seventeenth Chapter

Monastic Life

IF YOU wish peace and concord with others, you must learn to break your will in many things. To live in monasteries or religious communities, to remain there without complaint, and to persevere faithfully till death is no small matter. Blessed indeed is he who there lives a good life and there ends his days in happiness.

If you would persevere in seeking perfection, you must consider yourself a pilgrim, an exile on earth. If you would become a religious, you must be content to seem a fool for the sake of Christ. Habit and tonsure change a man but little; it is the change of life, the complete mortification of passions that endow a true religious.

He who seeks anything but God alone and the salvation of his soul will find only trouble and grief, and he who does not try to become the least, the servant of all, cannot remain at peace for long.

You have come to serve, not to rule. You must understand, too, that you have been called to suffer and to work, not to idle and gossip away your time. Here men are tried as gold in a furnace. Here no man can remain unless he desires with all his heart to humble himself before God.

The Eighteenth Chapter

The Example Set Us by the Holy Fathers

CONSIDER the lively examples set us by the saints, who possessed the light of true perfection and religion, and you will see how little, how nearly nothing, we do. What, alas, is our life, compared with theirs? The saints and friends of Christ served the Lord in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness, in work and fatigue, in vigils and fasts, in prayers and holy meditations, in persecutions and many afflictions. How many and severe were the trials they suffered—the Apostles, martyrs, confessors, virgins, and all the rest who willed to follow in the footsteps of Christ! They hated their lives on earth that they might have life in eternity.

How strict and detached were the lives the holy hermits led in the desert! What long and grave temptations they suffered! How often were they beset by the enemy! What frequent and ardent prayers they offered to God! What rigorous fasts they observed! How great their zeal and their love for spiritual perfection! How brave the fight they waged to master their evil habits! What pure and straightforward purpose they showed toward God! By day they labored and by night they spent themselves in long prayers. Even at work they did not cease from mental prayer. They used all their time profitably; every hour seemed too short for serving God, and in the great sweetness of contemplation, they forgot even their bodily needs.

They renounced all riches, dignities, honors, friends, and associates. They desired nothing of the world. They scarcely allowed themselves the necessities of life, and the service of the body, even when necessary, was irksome to them. They were poor in earthly things but rich in grace and virtue. Outwardly destitute, inwardly they were full of grace and divine consolation. Strangers to the world, they were close and intimate friends of God. To themselves they seemed as nothing, and they were despised by the

world, but in the eyes of God they were precious and beloved. They lived in true humility and simple obedience; they walked in charity and patience, making progress daily on the pathway of spiritual life and obtaining great favor with God.

They were given as an example for all religious, and their power to stimulate us to perfection ought to be greater than that of the lukewarm to tempt us to laxity.

How great was the fervor of all religious in the beginning of their holy institution! How great their devotion in prayer and their rivalry for virtue! What splendid discipline flourished among them! What great reverence and obedience in all things under the rule of a superior! The footsteps they left behind still bear witness that they indeed were holy and perfect men who fought bravely and conquered the world.

Today, he who is not a transgressor and who can bear patiently the duties which he has taken upon himself is considered great. How lukewarm and negligent we are! We lose our original fervor very quickly and we even become weary of life from laziness! Do not you, who have seen so many examples of the devout, fall asleep in the pursuit of virtue!

The Nineteenth Chapter

The Practices of a Good Religious

THE life of a good religious ought to abound in every virtue so that he is interiorly what to others he appears to be. With good reason there ought to be much more within than appears on the outside, for He who sees within is God, Whom we ought to reverence most highly wherever we are and in Whose sight we ought to walk pure as the angels.

Each day we ought to renew our resolutions and arouse ourselves to fervor as though it were the first day of our religious life. We ought to say: “Help me, O Lord God, in my good resolution and in Your holy service. Grant me now, this very day, to begin perfectly, for thus far I have done nothing.”

As our intention is, so will be our progress; and he who desires perfection must be very diligent. If the strong-willed man fails frequently, what of the man who makes up his mind seldom or half-heartedly? Many are the ways of failing in our resolutions; even a slight omission of religious practice entails a loss of some kind.

Just men depend on the grace of God rather than on their own wisdom in keeping their resolutions. In Him they confide every undertaking, for man, indeed, proposes but God disposes, and God’s way is not man’s. If a habitual exercise is sometimes omitted out of piety or in the interests of another, it can easily be resumed later. But if it be abandoned carelessly, through weariness or neglect, then the fault is great and will prove hurtful. Much as we try, we still fail too easily in many things. Yet we must always have some fixed purpose, especially against things which beset us the most. Our outward and inward lives alike must be closely watched and well ordered, for both are important to perfection.

If you cannot recollect yourself continuously, do so once a day at least, in the morning or in the evening. In the morning make a resolution and in the evening examine yourself on what you have said this day, what you have done and thought, for in these things perhaps you have often offended God and those about you.

Arm yourself like a man against the devil's assaults. Curb your appetite and you will more easily curb every inclination of the flesh. Never be completely unoccupied, but read or write or pray or meditate or do something for the common good. Bodily discipline, however, must be undertaken with discretion and is not to be practiced indiscriminately by everyone.

Devotions not common to all are not to be displayed in public, for such personal things are better performed in private. Furthermore, beware of indifference to community prayer through love of your own devotions. If, however, after doing completely and faithfully all you are bound and commanded to do, you then have leisure, use it as personal piety suggests.

Not everyone can have the same devotion. One exactly suits this person, another that. Different exercises, likewise, are suitable for different times, some for feast days and some again for weekdays. In time of temptation we need certain devotions. For days of rest and peace we need others. Some are suitable when we are sad, others when we are joyful in the Lord.

About the time of the principal feasts good devotions ought to be renewed and the intercession of the saints more fervently implored. From one feast day to the next we ought to fix our purpose as though we were then to pass from this world and come to the eternal holyday.

During holy seasons, finally, we ought to prepare ourselves carefully, to live holier lives, and to observe each rule more strictly, as though we were soon to receive from God the reward of our labors. If this end be deferred, let us believe that we are not well prepared and that we are not yet worthy of the great glory that shall in due time be revealed to us. Let us try, meanwhile, to prepare ourselves better for death.

"Blessed is the servant," says Christ, "whom his master, when he cometh, shall find watching. Amen I say to you: he shall make him ruler over all his goods."

The Twentieth Chapter

The Love of Solitude and Silence

SEEK a suitable time for leisure and meditate often on the favors of God. Leave curiosities alone. Read such matters as bring sorrow to the heart rather than occupation to the mind. If you withdraw yourself from unnecessary talking and idle running about, from listening to gossip and rumors, you will find enough time that is suitable for holy meditation.

Very many great saints avoided the company of men wherever possible and chose to serve God in retirement. "As often as I have been among men," said one writer, "I have returned less a man." We often find this to be true when we take part in long conversations. It is easier to be silent altogether than not to speak too much. To stay at home is easier than to be sufficiently on guard while away. Anyone, then, who aims to live the inner and spiritual life must go apart, with Jesus, from the crowd.

No man appears in safety before the public eye unless he first relishes obscurity. No man is safe in speaking unless he loves to be silent. No man rules safely unless he is willing to be ruled. No man commands safely unless he has learned well how to obey. No man rejoices safely unless he has within him the testimony of a good conscience.

More than this, the security of the saints was always enveloped in the fear of God, nor were they less cautious and humble because they were conspicuous for great virtues and graces. The security of the wicked, on the contrary, springs from pride and presumption, and will end in their own deception.

Never promise yourself security in this life, even though you seem to be a good religious, or a devout hermit. It happens very often that those whom men esteem highly are more seriously endangered by their own excessive confidence. Hence, for many it is better not to be too free from temptations,

but often to be tried lest they become too secure, too filled with pride, or even too eager to fall back upon external comforts.

If only a man would never seek passing joys or entangle himself with worldly affairs, what a good conscience he would have. What great peace and tranquillity would be his, if he cut himself off from all empty care and thought only of things divine, things helpful to his soul, and put all his trust in God.

No man deserves the consolation of heaven unless he persistently arouses himself to holy contrition. If you desire true sorrow of heart, seek the privacy of your cell and shut out the uproar of the world, as it is written: "In your chamber bewail your sins." There you will find what too often you lose abroad.

Your cell will become dear to you if you remain in it, but if you do not, it will become wearisome. If in the beginning of your religious life, you live within your cell and keep to it, it will soon become a special friend and a very great comfort.

In silence and quiet the devout soul advances in virtue and learns the hidden truths of Scripture. There she finds a flood of tears with which to bathe and cleanse herself nightly, that she may become the more intimate with her Creator the farther she withdraws from all the tumult of the world. For God and His holy angels will draw near to him who withdraws from friends and acquaintances.

It is better for a man to be obscure and to attend to his salvation than to neglect it and work miracles. It is praiseworthy for a religious seldom to go abroad, to flee the sight of men and have no wish to see them.

Why wish to see what you are not permitted to have? "The world passes away and the concupiscence thereof." Sensual craving sometimes entices you to wander around, but when the moment is past, what do you bring back with you save a disturbed conscience and heavy heart? A happy going often leads to a sad return, a merry evening to a mournful dawn. Thus, all carnal joy begins sweetly but in the end brings remorse and death.

What can you find elsewhere that you cannot find here in your cell? Behold heaven and earth and all the elements, for of these all things are made. What can you see anywhere under the sun that will remain long? Perhaps you think you will completely satisfy yourself, but you cannot do

so, for if you should see all existing things, what would they be but an empty vision?

Raise your eyes to God in heaven and pray because of your sins and shortcomings. Leave vanity to the vain. Set yourself to the things which God has commanded you to do. Close the door upon yourself and call to you Jesus, your Beloved. Remain with Him in your cell, for nowhere else will you find such peace. If you had not left it, and had not listened to idle gossip, you would have remained in greater peace. But since you love, sometimes, to hear news, it is only right that you should suffer sorrow of heart from it.

The Twenty-First Chapter

Sorrow of Heart

IF YOU wish to make progress in virtue, live in the fear of the Lord, do not look for too much freedom, discipline your senses, and shun inane silliness. Sorrow opens the door to many a blessing which dissoluteness usually destroys.

It is a wonder that any man who considers and meditates on his exiled state and the many dangers to his soul, can ever be perfectly happy in this life. Lighthearted and heedless of our defects, we do not feel the real sorrows of our souls, but often indulge in empty laughter when we have good reason to weep. No liberty is true and no joy is genuine unless it is founded in the fear of the Lord and a good conscience.

Happy is the man who can throw off the weight of every care and recollect himself in holy contrition. Happy is the man who casts from him all that can stain or burden his conscience.

Fight like a man. Habit is overcome by habit. If you leave men alone, they will leave you alone to do what you have to do. Do not busy yourself about the affairs of others and do not become entangled in the business of your superiors. Keep an eye primarily on yourself and admonish yourself instead of your friends.

If you do not enjoy the favor of men, do not let it sadden you; but consider it a serious matter if you do not conduct yourself as well or as carefully as is becoming for a servant of God and a devout religious.

It is often better and safer for us to have few consolations in this life, especially comforts of the body. Yet if we do not have divine consolation or experience it rarely, it is our own fault because we seek no sorrow of heart and do not forsake vain outward satisfaction.

Consider yourself unworthy of divine solace and deserving rather of much tribulation. When a man is perfectly contrite, the whole world is bitter and wearisome to him.

A good man always finds enough over which to mourn and weep; whether he thinks of himself or of his neighbor he knows that no one lives here without suffering, and the closer he examines himself the more he grieves.

The sins and vices in which we are so entangled that we can rarely apply ourselves to the contemplation of heaven are matters for just sorrow and inner remorse.

I do not doubt that you would correct yourself more earnestly if you would think more of an early death than of a long life. And if you pondered in your heart the future pains of hell or of purgatory, I believe you would willingly endure labor and trouble and would fear no hardship. But since these thoughts never pierce the heart and since we are enamored of flattering pleasure, we remain very cold and indifferent. Our wretched body complains so easily because our soul is altogether too lifeless.

Pray humbly to the Lord, therefore, that He may give you the spirit of contrition and say with the Prophet: "Feed me, Lord, with the bread of mourning and give me to drink of tears in full measure."

The Twenty-Second Chapter

Thoughts on the Misery of Man

WHEREVER you are, wherever you go, you are miserable unless you turn to God. So why be dismayed when things do not happen as you wish and desire? Is there anyone who has everything as he wishes? No—neither I, nor you, nor any man on earth. There is no one in the world, be he Pope or king, who does not suffer trial and anguish.

Who is the better off then? Surely, it is the man who will suffer something for God. Many unstable and weak-minded people say: “See how well that man lives, how rich, how great he is, how powerful and mighty.” But you must lift up your eyes to the riches of heaven and realize that the material goods of which they speak are nothing. These things are uncertain and very burdensome because they are never possessed without anxiety and fear. Man’s happiness does not consist in the possession of abundant goods; a very little is enough.

Living on earth is truly a misery. The more a man desires spiritual life, the more bitter the present becomes to him, because he understands better and sees more clearly the defects, the corruption of human nature. To eat and drink, to watch and sleep, to rest, to labor, and to be bound by other human necessities is certainly a great misery and affliction to the devout man, who would gladly be released from them and be free from all sin. Truly, the inner man is greatly burdened in this world by the necessities of the body, and for this reason the Prophet prayed that he might be as free from them as possible, when he said: “From my necessities, O Lord, deliver me.”

But woe to those who know not their own misery, and greater woe to those who love this miserable and corruptible life. Some, indeed, can scarcely procure its necessities either by work or by begging; yet they love

it so much that, if they could live here always, they would care nothing for the kingdom of God.

How foolish and faithless of heart are those who are so engrossed in earthly things as to relish nothing but what is carnal! Miserable men indeed, for in the end they will see to their sorrow how cheap and worthless was the thing they loved.

The saints of God and all devout friends of Christ did not look to what pleases the body nor to the things that are popular from time to time. Their whole hope and aim centered on the everlasting good. Their whole desire pointed upward to the lasting and invisible realm, lest the love of what is visible drag them down to lower things.

Do not lose heart, then, my brother, in pursuing your spiritual life. There is yet time, and your hour is not past. Why delay your purpose? Arise! Begin at once and say: "Now is the time to act, now is the time to fight, now is the proper time to amend."

When you are troubled and afflicted, that is the time to gain merit. You must pass through water and fire before coming to rest. Unless you do violence to yourself you will not overcome vice.

So long as we live in this fragile body, we can neither be free from sin nor live without weariness and sorrow. Gladly would we rest from all misery, but in losing innocence through sin we also lost true blessedness. Therefore, we must have patience and await the mercy of God until this iniquity passes, until mortality is swallowed up in life.

How great is the frailty of human nature which is ever prone to evil! Today you confess your sins and tomorrow you again commit the sins which you confessed. One moment you resolve to be careful, and yet after an hour you act as though you had made no resolution.

We have cause, therefore, because of our frailty and feebleness, to humble ourselves and never think anything great of ourselves. Through neglect we may quickly lose that which by God's grace we have acquired only through long, hard labor. What, eventually, will become of us who so quickly grow lukewarm? Woe to us if we presume to rest in peace and security when actually there is no true holiness in our lives. It would be beneficial for us, like good novices, to be instructed once more in the principles of a good life, to see if there be hope of amendment and greater spiritual progress in the future.

The Twenty-Third Chapter

Thoughts on Death

VERY soon your life here will end; consider, then, what may be in store for you elsewhere. Today we live; tomorrow we die and are quickly forgotten. Oh, the dullness and hardness of a heart which looks only to the present instead of preparing for that which is to come!

Therefore, in every deed and every thought, act as though you were to die this very day. If you had a good conscience you would not fear death very much. It is better to avoid sin than to fear death. If you are not prepared today, how will you be prepared tomorrow? Tomorrow is an uncertain day; how do you know you will have a tomorrow?

What good is it to live a long life when we amend that life so little? Indeed, a long life does not always benefit us, but on the contrary, frequently adds to our guilt. Would that in this world we had lived well throughout one single day. Many count up the years they have spent in religion but find their lives made little holier. If it is so terrifying to die, it is nevertheless possible that to live longer is more dangerous. Blessed is he who keeps the moment of death ever before his eyes and prepares for it every day.

If you have ever seen a man die, remember that you, too, must go the same way. In the morning consider that you may not live till evening, and when evening comes do not dare to promise yourself the dawn. Be always ready, therefore, and so live that death will never take you unprepared. Many die suddenly and unexpectedly, for in the unexpected hour the Son of God will come. When that last moment arrives you will begin to have a quite different opinion of the life that is now entirely past and you will regret very much that you were so careless and remiss.

How happy and prudent is he who tries now in life to be what he wants to be found in death. Perfect contempt of the world, a lively desire to advance in virtue, a love for discipline, the works of penance, readiness to obey, self-denial, and the endurance of every hardship for the love of Christ, these will give a man great expectations of a happy death.

You can do many good works when in good health; what can you do when you are ill? Few are made better by sickness. Likewise they who undertake many pilgrimages seldom become holy.

Do not put your trust in friends and relatives, and do not put off the care of your soul till later, for men will forget you more quickly than you think. It is better to provide now, in time, and send some good account ahead of you than to rely on the help of others. If you do not care for your own welfare now, who will care when you are gone?

The present is very precious; these are the days of salvation; now is the acceptable time. How sad that you do not spend the time in which you might purchase everlasting life in a better way. The time will come when you will want just one day, just one hour in which to make amends, and do you know whether you will obtain it?

See, then, dearly beloved, the great danger from which you can free yourself and the great fear from which you can be saved, if only you will always be wary and mindful of death. Try to live now in such a manner that at the moment of death you may be glad rather than fearful. Learn to die to the world now, that then you may begin to live with Christ. Learn to spurn all things now, that then you may freely go to Him. Chastise your body in penance now, that then you may have the confidence born of certainty.

Ah, foolish man, why do you plan to live long when you are not sure of living even a day? How many have been deceived and suddenly snatched away! How often have you heard of persons being killed by drownings, by fatal falls from high places, of persons dying at meals, at play, in fires, by the sword, in pestilence, or at the hands of robbers! Death is the end of everyone and the life of man quickly passes away like a shadow.

Who will remember you when you are dead? Who will pray for you? Do now, beloved, what you can, because you do not know when you will die, nor what your fate will be after death. Gather for yourself the riches of immortality while you have time. Think of nothing but your salvation. Care only for the things of God. Make friends for yourself now by honoring the

saints of God, by imitating their actions, so that when you depart this life they may receive you into everlasting dwellings.

Keep yourself as a stranger here on earth, a pilgrim whom its affairs do not concern at all. Keep your heart free and raise it up to God, for you have not here a lasting home. To Him direct your daily prayers, your sighs and tears, that your soul may merit after death to pass in happiness to the Lord.

The Twenty-Fourth Chapter

Judgment and the Punishment of Sin

IN ALL things consider the end; how you shall stand before the strict Judge from Whom nothing is hidden and Who will pronounce judgment in all justice, accepting neither bribes nor excuses. And you, miserable and wretched sinner, who fear even the countenance of an angry man, what answer will you make to the God Who knows all your sins? Why do you not provide for yourself against the day of judgment when no man can be excused or defended by another because each will have enough to do to answer for himself? In this life your work is profitable, your tears acceptable, your sighs audible, your sorrow satisfying and purifying.

The patient man goes through a great and salutary purgatory when he grieves more over the malice of one who harms him than for his own injury; when he prays readily for his enemies and forgives offenses from his heart; when he does not hesitate to ask pardon of others; when he is more easily moved to pity than to anger; when he does frequent violence to himself and tries to bring the body into complete subjection to the spirit.

It is better to atone for sin now and to cut away vices than to keep them for purgation in the hereafter. In truth, we deceive ourselves by our ill-advised love of the flesh. What will that fire feed upon but our sins? The more we spare ourselves now and the more we satisfy the flesh, the harder will the reckoning be and the more we keep for the burning.

For a man will be more grievously punished in the things in which he has sinned. There the lazy will be driven with burning prongs, and gluttons tormented with unspeakable hunger and thirst; the wanton and lust-loving will be bathed in burning pitch and foul brimstone; the envious will howl in their grief like mad dogs.

Every vice will have its own proper punishment. The proud will be faced with every confusion and the avaricious pinched with the most abject want. One hour of suffering there will be more bitter than a hundred years of the most severe penance here. In this life men sometimes rest from work and enjoy the comfort of friends, but the damned have no rest or consolation.

You must, therefore, take care and repent of your sins now so that on the day of judgment you may rest secure with the blessed. For on that day the just will stand firm against those who tortured and oppressed them, and he who now submits humbly to the judgment of men will arise to pass judgment upon them. The poor and humble will have great confidence, while the proud will be struck with fear. He who learned to be a fool in this world and to be scorned for Christ will then appear to have been wise.

In that day every trial borne in patience will be pleasing and the voice of iniquity will be stilled; the devout will be glad; the irreligious will mourn; and the mortified body will rejoice far more than if it had been pampered with every pleasure. Then the cheap garment will shine with splendor and the rich one become faded and worn; the poor cottage will be more praised than the gilded palace. In that day persevering patience will count more than all the power in this world; simple obedience will be exalted above all worldly cleverness; a good and clean conscience will gladden the heart of man far more than the philosophy of the learned; and contempt for riches will be of more weight than every treasure on earth.

Then you will find more consolation in having prayed devoutly than in having fared daintily; you will be happy that you preferred silence to prolonged gossip.

Then holy works will be of greater value than many fair words; strictness of life and hard penances will be more pleasing than all earthly delights.

Learn, then, to suffer little things now that you may not have to suffer greater ones in eternity. Prove here what you can bear hereafter. If you can suffer only a little now, how will you be able to endure eternal torment? If a little suffering makes you impatient now, what will hell fire do? In truth, you cannot have two joys: you cannot taste the pleasures of this world and afterward reign with Christ.

If your life to this moment had been full of honors and pleasures, what good would it do if at this instant you should die? All is vanity, therefore, except to love God and to serve Him alone.

He who loves God with all his heart does not fear death or punishment or judgment or hell, because perfect love assures access to God.

It is no wonder that he who still delights in sin fears death and judgment.

It is good, however, that even if love does not as yet restrain you from evil, at least the fear of hell does. The man who casts aside the fear of God cannot continue long in goodness but will quickly fall into the snares of the devil.

The Twenty-Fifth Chapter

Zeal in Amending our Lives

BE WATCHFUL and diligent in God's service and often think of why you left the world and came here. Was it not that you might live for God and become a spiritual man? Strive earnestly for perfection, then, because in a short time you will receive the reward of your labor, and neither fear nor sorrow shall come upon you at the hour of death.

Labor a little now, and soon you shall find great rest, in truth, eternal joy; for if you continue faithful and diligent in doing, God will undoubtedly be faithful and generous in rewarding. Continue to have reasonable hope of gaining salvation, but do not act as though you were certain of it lest you grow indolent and proud.

One day when a certain man who wavered often and anxiously between hope and fear was struck with sadness, he knelt in humble prayer before the altar of a church. While meditating on these things, he said: "Oh if I but knew whether I should persevere to the end!" Instantly he heard within the divine answer: "If you knew this, what would you do? Do now what you would do then and you will be quite secure." Immediately consoled and comforted, he resigned himself to the divine will and the anxious uncertainty ceased. His curiosity no longer sought to know what the future held for him, and he tried instead to find the perfect, the acceptable will of God in the beginning and end of every good work.

"Trust thou in the Lord and do good," says the Prophet; "dwell in the land and thou shalt feed on its riches."

There is one thing that keeps many from zealously improving their lives, that is, dread of the difficulty, the toil of battle. Certainly they who try bravely to overcome the most difficult and unpleasant obstacles far outstrip others in the pursuit of virtue. A man makes the most progress and merits

the most grace precisely in those matters wherein he gains the greatest victories over self and most mortifies his will. True, each one has his own difficulties to meet and conquer, but a diligent and sincere man will make greater progress even though he have more passions than one who is more even-tempered but less concerned about virtue.

Two things particularly further improvement—to withdraw oneself forcibly from those vices to which nature is viciously inclined, and to work fervently for those graces which are most needed.

Study also to guard against and to overcome the faults which in others very frequently displease you. Make the best of every opportunity, so that if you see or hear good example you may be moved to imitate it. On the other hand, take care lest you be guilty of those things which you consider reprehensible, or if you have ever been guilty of them, try to correct yourself as soon as possible. As you see others, so they see you.

How pleasant and sweet to behold brethren fervent and devout, well mannered and disciplined! How sad and painful to see them wandering in dissolution, not practicing the things to which they are called! How hurtful it is to neglect the purpose of their vocation and to attend to what is not their business!

Remember the purpose you have undertaken, and keep in mind the image of the Crucified. Even though you may have walked for many years on the pathway to God, you may well be ashamed if, with the image of Christ before you, you do not try to make yourself still more like Him.

The religious who concerns himself intently and devoutly with our Lord's most holy life and passion will find there an abundance of all things useful and necessary for him. He need not seek for anything better than Jesus.

If the Crucified should come to our hearts, how quickly and abundantly we would learn!

A fervent religious accepts all the things that are commanded him and does them well, but a negligent and lukewarm religious has trial upon trial, and suffers anguish from every side because he has no consolation within and is forbidden to seek it from without. The religious who does not live up to his rule exposes himself to dreadful ruin, and he who wishes to be more free and untrammelled will always be in trouble, for something or other will always displease him.

How do so many other religious who are confined in cloistered discipline get along? They seldom go out, they live in contemplation, their food is poor, their clothing coarse, they work hard, they speak but little, keep long vigils, rise early, pray much, read frequently, and subject themselves to all sorts of discipline. Think of the Carthusians and the Cistercians, the monks and nuns of different orders, how every night they rise to sing praise to the Lord. It would be a shame if you should grow lazy in such holy service when so many religious have already begun to rejoice in God.

If there were nothing else to do but praise the Lord God with all your heart and voice, if you had never to eat, or drink, or sleep, but could praise God always and occupy yourself solely with spiritual pursuits, how much happier you would be than you are now, a slave to every necessity of the body! Would that there were no such needs, but only the spiritual refreshments of the soul which, sad to say, we taste too seldom!

When a man reaches a point where he seeks no solace from any creature, then he begins to relish God perfectly. Then also he will be content no matter what may happen to him. He will neither rejoice over great things nor grieve over small ones, but will place himself entirely and confidently in the hands of God, Who for him is all in all, to Whom nothing ever perishes or dies, for Whom all things live, and Whom they serve as He desires.

Always remember your end and do not forget that lost time never returns. Without care and diligence you will never acquire virtue. When you begin to grow lukewarm, you are falling into the beginning of evil; but if you give yourself to fervor, you will find peace and will experience less hardship because of God's grace and the love of virtue.

A fervent and diligent man is ready for all things. It is greater work to resist vices and passions than to sweat in physical toil. He who does not overcome small faults, shall fall little by little into greater ones.

If you have spent the day profitably, you will always be happy at eventide. Watch over yourself, arouse yourself, warn yourself, and regardless of what becomes of others, do not neglect yourself. The more violence you do to yourself, the more progress you will make.

BOOK TWO

The Interior Life

The First Chapter

Meditation

THE kingdom of God is within you,” says the Lord.

Turn, then, to God with all your heart. Forsake this wretched world and your soul shall find rest. Learn to despise external things, to devote yourself to those that are within, and you will see the kingdom of God come unto you, that kingdom which is peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, gifts not given to the impious.

Christ will come to you offering His consolation, if you prepare a fit dwelling for Him in your heart, whose beauty and glory, wherein He takes delight, are all from within. His visits with the inward man are frequent, His communion sweet and full of consolation, His peace great, and His intimacy wonderful indeed.

Therefore, faithful soul, prepare your heart for this Bridegroom that He may come and dwell within you; He Himself says: “If any one love Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and will make Our abode with him.”

Give place, then, to Christ, but deny entrance to all others, for when you have Christ you are rich and He is sufficient for you. He will provide for you. He will supply your every want, so that you need not trust in frail, changeable men. Christ remains forever, standing firmly with us to the end.

Do not place much confidence in weak and mortal man, helpful and friendly though he be; and do not grieve too much if he sometimes opposes and contradicts you. Those who are with us today may be against us tomorrow, and vice versa, for men change with the wind. Place all your trust in God; let Him be your fear and your love. He will answer for you; He will do what is best for you.

You have here no lasting home. You are a stranger and a pilgrim wherever you may be, and you shall have no rest until you are wholly united with Christ.

Why do you look about here when this is not the place of your repose? Dwell rather upon heaven and give but a passing glance to all earthly things. They all pass away, and you together with them. Take care, then, that you do not cling to them lest you be entrapped and perish. Fix your mind on the Most High, and pray unceasingly to Christ.

If you do not know how to meditate on heavenly things, direct your thoughts to Christ's passion and willingly behold His sacred wounds. If you turn devoutly to the wounds and precious stigmata of Christ, you will find great comfort in suffering, you will mind but little the scorn of men, and you will easily bear their slanderous talk.

When Christ was in the world, He was despised by men; in the hour of need He was forsaken by acquaintances and left by friends to the depths of scorn. He was willing to suffer and to be despised; do you dare to complain of anything? He had enemies and defamers; do you want everyone to be your friend, your benefactor? How can your patience be rewarded if no adversity test it? How can you be a friend of Christ if you are not willing to suffer any hardship? Suffer with Christ and for Christ if you wish to reign with Him.

Had you but once entered into perfect communion with Jesus or tasted a little of His ardent love, you would care nothing at all for your own comfort or discomfort but would rejoice in the reproach you suffer; for love of Him makes a man despise himself.

A man who is a lover of Jesus and of truth, a truly interior man who is free from uncontrolled affections, can turn to God at will and rise above himself to enjoy spiritual peace.

He who tastes life as it really is, not as men say or think it is, is indeed wise with the wisdom of God rather than of men.

He who learns to live the interior life and to take little account of outward things, does not seek special places or times to perform devout exercises. A spiritual man quickly recollects himself because he has never wasted his attention upon externals. No outside work, no business that cannot wait stands in his way. He adjusts himself to things as they happen. He whose disposition is well ordered cares nothing about the strange, perverse

behavior of others, for a man is upset and distracted only in proportion as he engrosses himself in externals.

If all were well with you, therefore, and if you were purified from all sin, everything would tend to your good and be to your profit. But because you are as yet neither entirely dead to self nor free from all earthly affection, there is much that often displeases and disturbs you. Nothing so mars and defiles the heart of man as impure attachment to created things. But if you refuse external consolation, you will be able to contemplate heavenly things and often to experience interior joy.

The Second Chapter

Humility

BE NOT troubled about those who are with you or against you, but take care that God be with you in everything you do. Keep your conscience clear and God will protect you, for the malice of man cannot harm one whom God wishes to help. If you know how to suffer in silence, you will undoubtedly experience God's help. He knows when and how to deliver you; therefore, place yourself in His hands, for it is a divine prerogative to help men and free them from all distress.

It is often good for us to have others know our faults and rebuke them, for it gives us greater humility. When a man humbles himself because of his faults, he easily placates those about him and readily appeases those who are angry with him.

It is the humble man whom God protects and liberates; it is the humble whom He loves and consoles. To the humble He turns and upon them bestows great grace, that after their humiliation He may raise them up to glory. He reveals His secrets to the humble, and with kind invitation bids them come to Him. Thus, the humble man enjoys peace in the midst of many vexations, because his trust is in God, not in the world. Hence, you must not think that you have made any progress until you look upon yourself as inferior to all others.

The Third Chapter

Goodness and Peace in Man

FIRST keep peace with yourself; then you will be able to bring peace to others. A peaceful man does more good than a learned man. Whereas a passionate man turns even good to evil and is quick to believe evil, the peaceful man, being good himself, turns all things to good.

The man who is at perfect ease is never suspicious, but the disturbed and discontented spirit is upset by many a suspicion. He neither rests himself nor permits others to do so. He often says what ought not to be said and leaves undone what ought to be done. He is concerned with the duties of others but neglects his own.

Direct your zeal, therefore, first upon yourself; then you may with justice exercise it upon those about you. You are well versed in coloring your own actions with excuses which you will not accept from others, though it would be more just to accuse yourself and excuse your brother. If you wish men to bear with you, you must bear with them. Behold, how far you are from true charity and humility which does not know how to be angry with anyone, or to be indignant save only against self!

It is no great thing to associate with the good and gentle, for such association is naturally pleasing. Everyone enjoys a peaceful life and prefers persons of congenial habits. But to be able to live at peace with harsh and perverse men, or with the undisciplined and those who irritate us, is a great grace, a praiseworthy and manly thing.

Some people live at peace with themselves and with their fellow men, but others are never at peace with themselves nor do they bring it to anyone else. These latter are a burden to everyone, but they are more of a burden to themselves. A few, finally, live at peace with themselves and try to restore it to others.

Now, all our peace in this miserable life is found in humbly enduring suffering rather than in being free from it. He who knows best how to suffer will enjoy the greater peace, because he is the conqueror of himself, the master of the world, a friend of Christ, and an heir of heaven.

The Fourth Chapter

Purity of Mind and Unity of Purpose

A MAN is raised up from the earth by two wings—simplicity and purity. There must be simplicity in his intention and purity in his desires. Simplicity leads to God, purity embraces and enjoys Him.

If your heart is free from ill-ordered affection, no good deed will be difficult for you. If you aim at and seek after nothing but the pleasure of God and the welfare of your neighbor, you will enjoy freedom within.

If your heart were right, then every created thing would be a mirror of life for you and a book of holy teaching, for there is no creature so small and worthless that it does not show forth the goodness of God. If inwardly you were good and pure, you would see all things clearly and understand them rightly, for a pure heart penetrates to heaven and hell, and as a man is within, so he judges what is without. If there be joy in the world, the pure of heart certainly possess it; and if there be anguish and affliction anywhere, an evil conscience knows it too well.

As iron cast into fire loses its rust and becomes glowing white, so he who turns completely to God is stripped of his sluggishness and changed into a new man. When a man begins to grow lax, he fears a little toil and welcomes external comfort, but when he begins perfectly to conquer himself and to walk bravely in the ways of God, then he thinks those things less difficult which he thought so hard before.

The Fifth Chapter

Ourselves

WE MUST not rely too much upon ourselves, for grace and understanding are often lacking in us. We have but little inborn light, and this we quickly lose through negligence. Often we are not aware that we are so blind in heart. Meanwhile we do wrong, and then do worse in excusing it. At times we are moved by passion, and we think it zeal. We take others to task for small mistakes, and overlook greater ones in ourselves. We are quick enough to feel and brood over the things we suffer from others, but we think nothing of how much others suffer from us. If a man would weigh his own deeds fully and rightly, he would find little cause to pass severe judgment on others.

The interior man puts the care of himself before all other concerns, and he who attends to himself carefully does not find it hard to hold his tongue about others. You will never be devout of heart unless you are thus silent about the affairs of others and pay particular attention to yourself. If you attend wholly to God and yourself, you will be little disturbed by what you see about you.

Where are your thoughts when they are not upon yourself? And after attending to various things, what have you gained if you have neglected self? If you wish to have true peace of mind and unity of purpose, you must cast all else aside and keep only yourself before your eyes.

You will make great progress if you keep yourself free from all temporal cares, for to value anything that is temporal is a great mistake. Consider nothing great, nothing high, nothing pleasing, nothing acceptable, except God Himself or that which is of God. Consider the consolations of creatures as vanity, for the soul that loves God scorns all things that are inferior to

Him. God alone, the eternal and infinite, satisfies all, bringing comfort to the soul and true joy to the body.

The Sixth Chapter

The Joy of a Good Conscience

THE glory of a good man is the testimony of a good conscience. Therefore, keep your conscience good and you will always enjoy happiness, for a good conscience can bear a great deal and can bring joy even in the midst of adversity. But an evil conscience is ever restive and fearful.

Sweet shall be your rest if your heart does not reproach you.

Do not rejoice unless you have done well. Sinners never experience true interior joy or peace, for “there is no peace to the wicked,” says the Lord. Even if they say: “We are at peace, no evil shall befall us and no one dares to hurt us,” do not believe them; for the wrath of God will arise quickly, and their deeds will be brought to naught and their thoughts will perish.

To glory in adversity is not hard for the man who loves, for this is to glory in the cross of the Lord. But the glory given or received of men is short lived, and the glory of the world is ever companioned by sorrow. The glory of the good, however, is in their conscience and not in the lips of men, for the joy of the just is from God and in God, and their gladness is founded on truth.

The man who longs for the true, eternal glory does not care for that of time; and he who seeks passing fame or does not in his heart despise it, undoubtedly cares little for the glory of heaven.

He who minds neither praise nor blame possesses great peace of heart and, if his conscience is good, he will easily be contented and at peace.

Praise adds nothing to your holiness, nor does blame take anything from it. You are what you are, and you cannot be said to be better than you are in God’s sight. If you consider well what you are within, you will not care what men say about you. They look to appearances but God looks to the heart. They consider the deed but God weighs the motive.

It is characteristic of a humble soul always to do good and to think little of itself. It is a mark of great purity and deep faith to look for no consolation in created things. The man who desires no justification from without has clearly entrusted himself to God: “For not he who commendeth himself is approved,” says St. Paul, “but he whom God commendeth.”

To walk with God interiorly, to be free from any external affection—this is the state of the inward man.

The Seventh Chapter

Loving Jesus Above All Things

BLESSED is he who appreciates what it is to love Jesus and who despises himself for the sake of Jesus. Give up all other love for His, since He wishes to be loved alone above all things.

Affection for creatures is deceitful and inconstant, but the love of Jesus is true and enduring. He who clings to a creature will fall with its frailty, but he who gives himself to Jesus will ever be strengthened.

Love Him, then; keep Him as a friend. He will not leave you as others do, or let you suffer lasting death. Sometime, whether you will or not, you will have to part with everything. Cling, therefore, to Jesus in life and death; trust yourself to the glory of Him who alone can help you when all others fail.

Your Beloved is such that He will not accept what belongs to another—He wants your heart for Himself alone, to be enthroned therein as King in His own right. If you but knew how to free yourself entirely from all creatures, Jesus would gladly dwell within you.

You will find, apart from Him, that nearly all the trust you place in men is a total loss. Therefore, neither confide in nor depend upon a wind-shaken reed, for “all flesh is grass” and all its glory, like the flower of grass, will fade away.

You will quickly be deceived if you look only to the outward appearance of men, and you will often be disappointed if you seek comfort and gain in them. If, however, you seek Jesus in all things, you will surely find Him. Likewise, if you seek yourself, you will find yourself—to your own ruin. For the man who does not seek Jesus does himself much greater harm than the whole world and all his enemies could ever do.

The Eighth Chapter

The Intimate Friendship of Jesus

WHEN Jesus is near, all is well and nothing seems difficult. When He is absent, all is hard. When Jesus does not speak within, all other comfort is empty, but if He says only a word, it brings great consolation.

Did not Mary Magdalen rise at once from her weeping when Martha said to her: “The Master is come, and calleth for thee”? Happy is the hour when Jesus calls one from tears to joy of spirit.

How dry and hard you are without Jesus! How foolish and vain if you desire anything but Him! Is it not a greater loss than losing the whole world? For what, without Jesus, can the world give you? Life without Him is a relentless hell, but living with Him is a sweet paradise. If Jesus be with you, no enemy can harm you.

He who finds Jesus finds a rare treasure, indeed, a good above every good, whereas he who loses Him loses more than the whole world. The man who lives without Jesus is the poorest of the poor, whereas no one is so rich as the man who lives in His grace.

It is a great art to know how to converse with Jesus, and great wisdom to know how to keep Him. Be humble and peaceful, and Jesus will be with you. Be devout and calm, and He will remain with you. You may quickly drive Him away and lose His grace, if you turn back to the outside world. And, if you drive Him away and lose Him, to whom will you go and whom will you then seek as a friend? You cannot live well without a friend, and if Jesus be not your friend above all else, you will be very sad and desolate. Thus, you are acting foolishly if you trust or rejoice in any other. Choose the opposition of the whole world rather than offend Jesus. Of all those who are dear to you, let Him be your special love. Let all things be loved for the sake of Jesus, but Jesus for His own sake.

Jesus Christ must be loved alone with a special love for He alone, of all friends, is good and faithful. For Him and in Him you must love friends and foes alike, and pray to Him that all may know and love Him.

Never desire special praise or love, for that belongs to God alone Who has no equal. Never wish that anyone's affection be centered in you, nor let yourself be taken up with the love of anyone, but let Jesus be in you and in every good man. Be pure and free within, unentangled with any creature.

You must bring to God a clean and open heart if you wish to attend and see how sweet the Lord is. Truly you will never attain this happiness unless His grace prepares you and draws you on so that you may forsake all things to be united with Him alone.

When the grace of God comes to a man he can do all things, but when it leaves him he becomes poor and weak, abandoned, as it were, to affliction. Yet, in this condition he should not become dejected or despair. On the contrary, he should calmly await the will of God and bear whatever befalls him in praise of Jesus Christ, for after winter comes summer, after night, the day, and after the storm, a great calm.

The Ninth Chapter

Wanting No Share in Comfort

IT IS not hard to spurn human consolation when we have the divine. It is, however, a very great thing indeed to be able to live without either divine or human comforting and for the honor of God willingly to endure this exile of heart, not to seek oneself in anything, and to think nothing of one's own merit.

Does it matter much, if at the coming of grace, you are cheerful and devout? This is an hour desired by all, for he whom the grace of God sustains travels easily enough. What wonder if he feel no burden when borne up by the Almighty and led on by the Supreme Guide! For we are always glad to have something to comfort us, and only with difficulty does a man divest himself of self.

The holy martyr, Lawrence, with his priest, conquered the world because he despised everything in it that seemed pleasing to him, and for love of Christ patiently suffered the great high priest of God, Sixtus, whom he loved dearly, to be taken from him. Thus, by his love for the Creator he overcame the love of man, and chose instead of human consolation the good pleasure of God. So you, too, must learn to part with an intimate and much-needed friend for the love of God. Do not take it to heart when you are deserted by a friend, knowing that in the end we must all be parted from one another.

A man must fight long and bravely against himself before he learns to master himself fully and to direct all his affections toward God. When he trusts in himself, he easily takes to human consolation. The true lover of Christ, however, who sincerely pursues virtue, does not fall back upon consolations nor seek such pleasures of sense, but prefers severe trials and hard labors for the sake of Christ.

When, therefore, spiritual consolation is given by God, receive it gratefully, but understand that it is His gift and not your meriting. Do not exult, do not be overjoyed, do not be presumptuous, but be the humbler for the gift, more careful and wary in all your actions, for this hour will pass and temptation will come in its wake.

When consolation is taken away, do not at once despair but wait humbly and patiently for the heavenly visit, since God can restore to you more abundant solace.

This is neither new nor strange to one who knows God's ways, for such change of fortune often visited the great saints and prophets of old. Thus there was one who, when grace was with him, declared: "In my prosperity I said: I shall never be moved." But when grace was taken away, he adds what he experienced in himself: "Thou didst hide Thy face, and I was troubled." Meanwhile he does not despair; rather he prays more earnestly to the Lord, saying: "To Thee, O Lord, will I cry; and I will make supplication to my God." At length, he receives the fruit of his prayer, and testifying that he was heard, says "The Lord hath heard, and hath had mercy on me: the Lord became my helper." And how was he helped? "Thou hast turned," he says, "my mourning into joy, and hast surrounded me with gladness."

If this is the case with great saints, we who are weak and poor ought not to despair because we are fervent at times and at other times cold, for the spirit comes and goes according to His will. Of this the blessed Job declared: "Thou visitest him early in the morning, and Thou provest him suddenly."

In what can I hope, then, or in whom ought I trust, save only in the great mercy of God and the hope of heavenly grace? For though I have with me good men, devout brethren, faithful friends, holy books, beautiful treatises, sweet songs and hymns, all these help and please but little when I am abandoned by grace and left to my poverty. At such times there is no better remedy than patience and resignation of self to the will of God.

I have never met a man so religious and devout that he has not experienced at some time a withdrawal of grace and felt a lessening of fervor. No saint was so sublimely rapt and enlightened as not to be tempted before and after. He, indeed, is not worthy of the sublime contemplation of God who has not been tried by some tribulation for the sake of God. For temptation is usually the sign preceding the consolation that is to follow,

and heavenly consolation is promised to all those proved by temptation. “To him that overcometh,” says Christ, “I will give to eat of the Tree of Life.” Divine consolation, then, is given in order to make a man braver in enduring adversity, and temptation follows in order that he may not pride himself on the good he has done.

The devil does not sleep, nor is the flesh yet dead; therefore, you must never cease your preparation for battle, because on the right and on the left are enemies who never rest.

The Tenth Chapter

Appreciating God's Grace

WHY do you look for rest when you were born to work? Resign yourself to patience rather than to comfort, to carrying your cross rather than to enjoyment.

What man in the world, if he could always have them, would not readily accept consolation and spiritual joy, benefits which excel all earthly delights and pleasures of the body? The latter, indeed, are either vain or base, while spiritual joys, born of virtue and infused by God into pure minds, are alone truly pleasant and noble.

Now, since the moment of temptation is always nigh, since false freedom of mind and overconfidence in self are serious obstacles to these visitations from heaven, a man can never enjoy them just as he wishes.

God does well in giving the grace of consolation, but man does evil in not returning everything gratefully to God. Thus, the gifts of grace cannot flow in us when we are ungrateful to the Giver, when we do not return them to the Fountainhead. Grace is always given to him who is duly grateful, and what is wont to be given the humble will be taken away from the proud.

I do not desire consolation that robs me of contrition, nor do I care for contemplation that leads to pride, for not all that is high is holy, nor is all that is sweet good, nor every desire pure, nor all that is dear to us pleasing to God. I accept willingly the grace whereby I become more humble and contrite, more willing to renounce self.

The man who has been taught by the gift of grace, and who learns by the lash of its withdrawal, will never dare to attribute any good to himself, but will rather admit his poverty and emptiness. Give to God what is God's and ascribe to yourself what is yours. Give Him thanks, then, for His grace, but

place upon yourself alone the blame and the punishment your fault deserves.

Always take the lowest place and the highest will be given you, for the highest cannot exist apart from the lowest. The saints who are greatest before God are those who consider themselves the least, and the more humble they are within themselves, so much the more glorious they are. Since they do not desire vainglory, they are full of truth and heavenly glory. Being established and strengthened in God, they can by no means be proud. They attribute to God whatever good they have received; they seek no glory from one another but only that which comes from God alone. They desire above all things that He be praised in themselves and in all His saints—this is their constant purpose.

Be grateful, therefore, for the least gift and you will be worthy to receive a greater. Consider the least gift as the greatest, the most contemptible as something special. And, if you but look to the dignity of the Giver, no gift will appear too small or worthless. Even though He give punishments and scourges, accept them, because He acts for our welfare in whatever He allows to befall us.

He who desires to keep the grace of God ought to be grateful when it is given and patient when it is withdrawn. Let him pray that it return; let him be cautious and humble lest he lose it.

The Eleventh Chapter

Few Love the Cross of Jesus

JESUS has always many who love His heavenly kingdom, but few who bear His cross. He has many who desire consolation, but few who care for trial. He finds many to share His table, but few to take part in His fasting. All desire to be happy with Him; few wish to suffer anything for Him. Many follow Him to the breaking of bread, but few to the drinking of the chalice of His passion. Many revere His miracles; few approach the shame of the Cross. Many love Him as long as they encounter no hardship; many praise and bless Him as long as they receive some comfort from Him. But if Jesus hides Himself and leaves them for a while, they fall either into complaints or into deep dejection. Those, on the contrary, who love Him for His own sake and not for any comfort of their own, bless Him in all trial and anguish of heart as well as in the bliss of consolation. Even if He should never give them consolation, yet they would continue to praise Him and wish always to give Him thanks. What power there is in pure love for Jesus—love that is free from all self-interest and self-love!

Do not those who always seek consolation deserve to be called mercenaries? Do not those who always think of their own profit and gain prove that they love themselves rather than Christ? Where can a man be found who desires to serve God for nothing? Rarely indeed is a man so spiritual as to strip himself of all things. And who shall find a man so truly poor in spirit as to be free from every creature? His value is like that of things brought from the most distant lands.

If a man give all his wealth, it is nothing; if he do great penance, it is little; if he gain all knowledge, he is still far afield; if he have great virtue and much ardent devotion, he still lacks a great deal, and especially, the one thing that is most necessary to him. What is this one thing? That leaving all,

he forsake himself, completely renounce himself, and give up all private affections. Then, when he has done all that he knows ought to be done, let him consider it as nothing, let him make little of what may be considered great; let him in all honesty call himself an unprofitable servant. For truth itself has said: “When you shall have done all these things that are commanded you, say: we are unprofitable servants.”

Then he will be truly poor and stripped in spirit, and with the prophet may say: “I am alone and poor.” No one, however, is more wealthy than such a man; no one is more powerful, no one freer than he who knows how to leave all things and think of himself as the least of all.

The Twelfth Chapter

The Royal Road of the Holy Cross

TO MANY the saying, “Deny thyself, take up thy cross and follow Me,” seems hard, but it will be much harder to hear that final word: “Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.” Those who hear the word of the cross and follow it willingly now, need not fear that they will hear of eternal damnation on the day of judgment. This sign of the cross will be in the heavens when the Lord comes to judge. Then all the servants of the cross, who during life made themselves one with the Crucified, will draw near with great trust to Christ, the judge.

Why, then, do you fear to take up the cross when through it you can win a kingdom? In the cross is salvation, in the cross is life, in the cross is protection from enemies, in the cross is infusion of heavenly sweetness, in the cross is strength of mind, in the cross is joy of spirit, in the cross is highest virtue, in the cross is perfect holiness. There is no salvation of soul nor hope of everlasting life but in the cross.

Take up your cross, therefore, and follow Jesus, and you shall enter eternal life. He Himself opened the way before you in carrying His cross, and upon it He died for you, that you, too, might take up your cross and long to die upon it. If you die with Him, you shall also live with Him, and if you share His suffering, you shall also share His glory.

Behold, in the cross is everything, and upon your dying on the cross everything depends. There is no other way to life and to true inward peace than the way of the holy cross and daily mortification. Go where you will, seek what you will, you will not find a higher way, nor a less exalted but safer way, than the way of the holy cross. Arrange and order everything to suit your will and judgment, and still you will find that some suffering must

always be borne, willingly or unwillingly, and thus you will always find the cross.

Either you will experience bodily pain or you will undergo tribulation of spirit in your soul. At times you will be forsaken by God, at times troubled by those about you and, what is worse, you will often grow weary of yourself. You cannot escape, you cannot be relieved by any remedy or comfort but must bear with it as long as God wills. For He wishes you to learn to bear trial without consolation, to submit yourself wholly to Him that you may become more humble through suffering. No one understands the passion of Christ so thoroughly or heartily as the man whose lot it is to suffer the like himself.

The cross, therefore, is always ready; it awaits you everywhere. No matter where you may go, you cannot escape it, for wherever you go you take yourself with you and shall always find yourself. Turn where you will—above, below, without, or within—you will find a cross in everything, and everywhere you must have patience if you would have peace within and merit an eternal crown.

If you carry the cross willingly, it will carry and lead you to the desired goal where indeed there shall be no more suffering, but here there shall be. If you carry it unwillingly, you create a burden for yourself and increase the load, though still you have to bear it. If you cast away one cross, you will find another and perhaps a heavier one. Do you expect to escape what no mortal man can ever avoid? Which of the saints was without a cross or trial on this earth? Not even Jesus Christ, our Lord, Whose every hour on earth knew the pain of His passion. “It behooveth Christ to suffer, and to rise again from the dead, . . . and so enter into his glory.” How is it that you look for another way than this, the royal way of the holy cross?

The whole life of Christ was a cross and a martyrdom, and do you seek rest and enjoyment for yourself? You deceive yourself, you are mistaken if you seek anything but to suffer, for this mortal life is full of miseries and marked with crosses on all sides. Indeed, the more spiritual progress a person makes, so much heavier will he frequently find the cross, because as his love increases, the pain of his exile also increases.

Yet such a man, though afflicted in many ways, is not without hope of consolation, because he knows that great reward is coming to him for bearing his cross. And when he carries it willingly, every pang of tribulation

is changed into hope of solace from God. Besides, the more the flesh is distressed by affliction, so much the more is the spirit strengthened by inward grace. Not infrequently a man is so strengthened by his love of trials and hardship in his desire to conform to the cross of Christ, that he does not wish to be without sorrow or pain, since he believes he will be the more acceptable to God if he is able to endure more and more grievous things for His sake.

It is the grace of Christ, and not the virtue of man, which can and does bring it about that through fervor of spirit frail flesh learns to love and to gain what it naturally hates and shuns.

To carry the cross, to love the cross, to chastise the body and bring it to subjection, to flee honors, to endure contempt gladly, to despise self and wish to be despised, to suffer any adversity and loss, to desire no prosperous days on earth—this is not man's way. If you rely upon yourself, you can do none of these things, but if you trust in the Lord, strength will be given you from heaven and the world and the flesh will be made subject to your word. You will not even fear your enemy, the devil, if you are armed with faith and signed with the cross of Christ.

Set yourself, then, like a good and faithful servant of Christ, to bear bravely the cross of your Lord, Who out of love was crucified for you. Be ready to suffer many adversities and many kinds of trouble in this miserable life, for troublesome and miserable life will always be, no matter where you are; and so you will find it wherever you may hide. Thus it must be; and there is no way to evade the trials and sorrows of life but to bear them.

Drink the chalice of the Lord with affection if you wish to be His friend and to have part with Him. Leave consolation to God; let Him do as most pleases Him. On your part, be ready to bear sufferings and consider them the greatest consolation, for even though you alone were to undergo them all, the sufferings of this life are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come.

When you shall have come to the point where suffering is sweet and acceptable for the sake of Christ, then consider yourself fortunate, for you have found paradise on earth. But as long as suffering irks you and you seek to escape, so long will you be unfortunate, and the tribulation you seek to evade will follow you everywhere. If you put your mind to the things you

ought to consider, that is, to suffering and death, you would soon be in a better state and would find peace.

Although you were taken to the third heaven with Paul, you were not thereby insured against suffering. Jesus said: "I will show him how great things he must suffer for My name's sake." To suffer, then, remains your lot, if you mean to love Jesus and serve Him forever.

If you were but worthy to suffer something for the name of Jesus, what great glory would be in store for you, what great joy to all the saints of God, what great edification to those about you! For all men praise patience though there are few who wish to practice it.

With good reason, then, ought you to be willing to suffer a little for Christ since many suffer much more for the world.

Realize that you must lead a dying life; the more a man dies to himself, the more he begins to live unto God.

No man is fit to enjoy heaven unless he has resigned himself to suffer hardship for Christ. Nothing is more acceptable to God, nothing more helpful for you on this earth than to suffer willingly for Christ. If you had to make a choice, you ought to wish rather to suffer for Christ than to enjoy many consolations, for thus you would be more like Christ and more like all the saints. Our merit and progress consist not in many pleasures and comforts but rather in enduring great afflictions and sufferings.

If, indeed, there were anything better or more useful for man's salvation than suffering, Christ would have shown it by word and example. But He clearly exhorts The Disciples who follow Him and all who wish to follow Him to carry the cross, saying: "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me."

When, therefore, we have read and searched all that has been written, let this be the final conclusion—that through much suffering we must enter into the kingdom of God.

BOOK THREE

Internal Consolation

The First Chapter

The Inward Conversation of Christ with the Faithful Soul

I WILL hear what the Lord God will speak in me.”

Blessed is the soul who hears the Lord speaking within her, who receives the word of consolation from His lips. Blessed are the ears that catch the accents of divine whispering, and pay no heed to the murmurings of this world. Blessed indeed are the ears that listen, not to the voice which sounds without, but to the truth which teaches within. Blessed are the eyes which are closed to exterior things and are fixed upon those which are interior. Blessed are they who penetrate inwardly, who try daily to prepare themselves more and more to understand mysteries. Blessed are they who long to give their time to God, and who cut themselves off from the hindrances of the world.

Consider these things, my soul, and close the door of your senses, so that you can hear what the Lord your God speaks within you. “I am your salvation,” says your Beloved. “I am your peace and your life. Remain with Me and you will find peace. Dismiss all passing things and seek the eternal. What are all temporal things but snares? And what help will all creatures be able to give you if you are deserted by the Creator?” Leave all these things, therefore, and make yourself pleasing and faithful to your Creator so that you may attain to true happiness.

The Second Chapter

Truth Speaks Inwardly Without the Sound of Words

The Disciple

SPEAK, Lord, for Thy servant heareth.” “I am Thy servant. Give me understanding that I may know Thine ordinances . . . Incline my heart to Thine ordinances . . . Let Thy speech distil as the dew.”

The children of Israel once said to Moses: “Speak thou to us and we will hear thee: let not the Lord speak to us, lest we die.”

Not so, Lord, not so do I pray. Rather with Samuel the prophet I entreat humbly and earnestly: “Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth.” Do not let Moses or any of the prophets speak to me; but You speak, O Lord God, Who inspired and enlightened all the prophets; for You alone, without them, can instruct me perfectly, whereas they, without You, can do nothing. They, indeed, utter fine words, but they cannot impart the spirit. They do indeed speak beautifully, but if You remain silent they cannot inflame the heart. They deliver the message; You lay bare the sense. They place before us mysteries, but You unlock their meaning. They proclaim commandments; You help us to keep them. They point out the way; You give strength for the journey. They work only outwardly; You instruct and enlighten our hearts. They water on the outside; You give the increase.

They cry out words; You give understanding to the hearer.

Let not Moses speak to me, therefore, but You, the Lord my God, everlasting truth, speak lest I die and prove barren if I am merely given outward advice and am not inflamed within; lest the word heard and not kept, known and not loved, believed and not obeyed, rise up in judgment against me.

Speak, therefore, Lord, for Your servant listens. “Thou hast the words of eternal life.” Speak to me for the comfort of my soul and for the amendment of my life, for Your praise, Your glory, and Your everlasting honor.

The Third Chapter

Listen Humbly to the Words of God. Many Do Not Heed Them

The Voice of Christ

MY CHILD, hear My words, words of greatest sweetness surpassing all the knowledge of the philosophers and wise men of earth. My words are spirit and life, and they are not to be weighed by man's understanding. They are not to be invoked in vanity but are to be heard in silence, and accepted with all humility and with great affection.

The Disciple

“Happy is the man whom Thou admonishest, O Lord, and teachest out of Thy law, to give him peace from the days of evil,” and that he be not desolate on earth.

The Voice of Christ

I taught the prophets from the beginning, and even to this day I continue to speak to all men. But many are hardened. Many are deaf to My voice. Most men listen more willingly to the world than to God. They are more ready to follow the appetite of their flesh than the good pleasure of God. The world, which promises small and passing things, is served with great eagerness: I promise great and eternal things and the hearts of men grow dull. Who is there that serves and obeys Me in all things with as great care as that with which the world and its masters are served?

“Be thou ashamed, O Sidon, for the sea speaketh.” And if you ask why, listen to the cause: for a small gain they travel far; for eternal life many will

scarcely lift a foot from the ground. They seek a petty reward, and sometimes fight shamefully in law courts for a single piece of money. They are not afraid to work day and night for a trifle or an empty promise. But, for an unchanging good, for a reward beyond estimate, for the greatest honor and for glory everlasting, it must be said to their shame that men begrudge even the least fatigue. Be ashamed, then, lazy and complaining servant, that they should be found more eager for perdition than you are for life, that they rejoice more in vanity than you in truth.

Sometimes indeed their expectations fail them, but My promise never deceives, nor does it send away empty-handed him who trusts in Me. What I have promised I will give. What I have said I will fulfill, if only a man remain faithful in My love to the end. I am the rewarder of all the good, the strong approver of all who are devoted to Me.

Write My words in your heart and meditate on them earnestly, for in time of temptation they will be very necessary. What you do not understand when you read, you will learn in the day of visitation. I am wont to visit My elect in two ways—by temptation and by consolation. To them I read two lessons daily—one reproving their vices, the other exhorting them to progress in virtue. He who has My words and despises them has that which shall condemn him on the last day.

A Prayer for the Grace of Devotion

O Lord my God, You are all my good. And who am I that I should dare to speak to You? I am Your poorest and meanest servant, a vile worm, much more poor and contemptible than I know or dare to say. Yet remember me, Lord, because I am nothing, I have nothing, and I can do nothing. You alone are good, just, and holy. You can do all things, You give all things, You fill all things: only the sinner do You leave empty-handed. Remember Your tender mercies and fill my heart with Your grace, You Who will not allow Your works to be in vain. How can I bear this life of misery unless You comfort me with Your mercy and grace? Do not turn Your face from me. Do not delay Your visitation. Do not withdraw Your consolation, lest in Your sight my soul become as desert land. Teach me, Lord, to do Your will. Teach me to live worthily and humbly in Your sight, for You are my wisdom Who know me truly, and Who knew me even before the world was made and before I was born into it.

The Fourth Chapter

We Must Walk Before God in Humility and Truth

The Voice of Christ

MY CHILD, walk before Me in truth, and seek Me always in the simplicity of your heart. He who walks before Me in truth shall be defended from the attacks of evil, and the truth shall free him from seducers and from the slanders of wicked men. For if the truth has made you free, then you shall be free indeed, and you shall not care for the vain words of men.

The Disciple

O Lord, it is true. I ask that it be with me as You say. Let your truth teach me. Let it guard me, and keep me safe to the end. Let it free me from all evil affection and badly ordered love, and I shall walk with You in great freedom of heart.

The Voice of Christ

I shall teach you those things which are right and pleasing to Me. Consider your sins with great displeasure and sorrow, and never think yourself to be someone because of your good works. You are truly a sinner. You are subject to many passions and entangled in them. Of yourself you always tend to nothing. You fall quickly, are quickly overcome, quickly troubled, and quickly undone. You have nothing in which you can glory, but you have many things for which you should think yourself vile, for you are much weaker than you can comprehend. Hence, let none of the things you do seem great to you. Let nothing seem important or precious or desirable

except that which is everlasting. Let the eternal truth please you above all things, and let your extreme unworthiness always displease you. Fear nothing, abhor nothing, and fly nothing as you do your own vices and sins; these should be more unpleasant for you than any material losses.

Some men walk before Me without sincerity. Led on by a certain curiosity and arrogance, they wish to know My secrets and to understand the high things of God, to the neglect of themselves and their own salvation. Through their own pride and curiosity, and because I am against them, such men often fall into great temptations and sins.

Fear the judgments of God! Dread the wrath of the Almighty! Do not discuss the works of the Most High, but examine your sins—in what serious things you have offended and how many good things you have neglected.

Some carry their devotion only in books, some in pictures, some in outward signs and figures. Some have Me on their lips when there is little of Me in their hearts. Others, indeed, with enlightened understanding and purified affections, constantly long for everlasting things; they are unwilling to hear of earthly affairs and only with reluctance do they serve the necessities of nature. These sense what the Spirit of truth speaks within them: for He teaches them to despise earthly things and to love those of heaven, to neglect the world, and each day and night to desire heaven.

The Fifth Chapter

The Wonderful Effect of Divine Love

The Disciple

I BLESS You, O heavenly Father, Father of my Lord Jesus Christ, for having condescended to remember me, a poor creature. Thanks to You, O Father of mercies, God of all consolation, Who with Your comfort sometimes refresh me, who am not worthy of it. I bless You always and glorify You with Your only-begotten Son and the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, forever and ever.

Ah, Lord God, my holy Lover, when You come into my heart, all that is within me will rejoice. You are my glory and the exultation of my heart. You are my hope and refuge in the day of my tribulation. But because my love is as yet weak and my virtue imperfect, I must be strengthened and comforted by You. Visit me often, therefore, and teach me Your holy discipline. Free me from evil passions and cleanse my heart of all disorderly affection so that, healed and purified within, I may be fit to love, strong to suffer, and firm to persevere.

Love is an excellent thing, a very great blessing, indeed. It makes every difficulty easy, and bears all wrongs with equanimity. For it bears a burden without being weighted and renders sweet all that is bitter. The noble love of Jesus spurs to great deeds and excites longing for that which is more perfect. Love tends upward; it will not be held down by anything low. Love wishes to be free and estranged from all worldly affections, lest its inward sight be obstructed, lest it be entangled in any temporal interest and overcome by adversity.

Nothing is sweeter than love, nothing stronger or higher or wider; nothing is more pleasant, nothing fuller, and nothing better in heaven or on

earth, for love is born of God and cannot rest except in God, Who is above all created things.

One who is in love flies, runs, and rejoices; he is free, not bound. He gives all for all and possesses all in all, because he rests in the one sovereign Good, Who is above all things, and from Whom every good flows and proceeds. He does not look to the gift but turns himself above all gifts to the Giver.

Love often knows no limits but overflows all bounds. Love feels no burden, thinks nothing of troubles, attempts more than it is able, and does not plead impossibility, because it believes that it may and can do all things. For this reason, it is able to do all, performing and effecting much where he who does not love fails and falls.

Love is watchful. Sleeping, it does not slumber. Wearied, it is not tired. Pressed, it is not straitened. Alarmed, it is not confused, but like a living flame, a burning torch, it forces its way upward and passes unharmed through every obstacle.

If a man loves, he will know the sound of this voice. For this warm affection of soul is a loud voice crying in the ears of God, and it says: "My God, my love, You are all mine and I am all Yours. Give me an increase of love, that I may learn to taste with the inward lips of my heart how sweet it is to love, how sweet to be dissolved in love and bathe in it. Let me be rapt in love. Let me rise above self in great fervor and wonder. Let me sing the hymn of love, and let me follow You, my Love, to the heights. Let my soul exhaust itself in praising You, rejoicing out of love. Let me love You more than myself, and let me not love myself except for Your sake. In You let me love all those who truly love You, as the law of love, which shines forth from You, commands."

Love is swift, sincere, kind, pleasant, and delightful. Love is strong, patient and faithful, prudent, long-suffering, and manly. Love is never self-seeking, for in whatever a person seeks himself there he falls from love. Love is circumspect, humble, and upright. It is neither soft nor light, nor intent upon vain things. It is sober and chaste, firm and quiet, guarded in all the senses. Love is subject and obedient to superiors. It is mean and contemptible in its own eyes, devoted and thankful to God; always trusting and hoping in Him even when He is distasteful to it, for there is no living in love without sorrow. He who is not ready to suffer all things and to stand

resigned to the will of the Beloved is not worthy to be called a lover. A lover must embrace willingly all that is difficult and bitter for the sake of the Beloved, and he should not turn away from Him because of adversities.

The Sixth Chapter

The Proving of a True Lover

The Voice of Christ

MY CHILD, you are not yet a brave and wise lover.

The Disciple

Why, Lord?

The Voice of Christ

Because, on account of a slight difficulty you give up what you have undertaken and are too eager to seek consolation.

The brave lover stands firm in temptations and pays no heed to the crafty persuasions of the enemy. As I please him in prosperity, so in adversity I am not displeasing to him. The wise lover regards not so much the gift of Him Who loves as the love of Him Who gives. He regards the affection of the Giver rather than the value of the gift, and sets his Beloved above all gifts. The noble lover does not rest in the gift but in Me Who am above every gift.

All is not lost, then, if you sometimes feel less devout than you wish toward Me or My saints. That good and sweet feeling which you sometimes have is the effect of present grace and a certain foretaste of your heavenly home. You must not lean upon it too much, because it comes and goes. But to fight against evil thoughts which attack you is a sign of virtue and great merit. Do not, therefore, let strange fantasies disturb you, no matter what they concern. Hold strongly to your resolution and keep a right intention toward God.

It is not an illusion that you are sometimes rapt in ecstasy and then quickly returned to the usual follies of your heart. For these are evils which you suffer rather than commit; and so long as they displease you and you struggle against them, it is a matter of merit and not a loss.

You must know that the old enemy tries by all means in his power to hinder your desire for good and to turn you from every devotional practice, especially from the veneration of the saints, from devout meditation on My passion, and from your firm purpose of advancing in virtue. He suggests many evil thoughts that he may cause you weariness and horror, and thus draw you away from prayer and holy reading. A humble confession displeases him and, if he could, he would make you omit Holy Communion.

Do not believe him or heed him, even though he often sets traps to deceive you. When he suggests evil, unclean things, accuse him. Say to him: "Away, unclean spirit! Shame, miserable creature! You are but filth to bring such things to my ears. Begone, most wretched seducer! You shall have no part in me, for Jesus will be my strength, and you shall be confounded. I would rather die and suffer all torments than consent to you. Be still! Be silent! Though you bring many troubles upon me I will have none of you. The Lord is my light, my salvation. Whom shall I fear? Though armies unite against me, my heart will not fear, for the Lord is my Helper, my Redeemer."

Fight like a good soldier and if you sometimes fall through weakness, rise again with greater strength than before, trusting in My most abundant grace. But beware of vain complacency and pride. For many are led into error through these faults and sometimes fall into almost perpetual blindness. Let the fall of these, who proudly presume on self, be a warning to you and a constant incentive to humility.

The Seventh Chapter

Grace Must Be Hidden Under the Mantle of Humility

The Voice of Christ

IT IS better and safer for you to conceal the grace of devotion, not to be elated by it, not to speak or think much of it, and instead to humble yourself and fear lest it is being given to one unworthy of it. Do not cling too closely to this affection, for it may quickly be changed to its opposite. When you are in grace, think how miserable and needy you are without it. Your progress in spiritual life does not consist in having the grace of consolation, but in enduring its withdrawal with humility, resignation, and patience, so that you neither become listless in prayer nor neglect your other duties in the least; but on the contrary do what you can do as well as you know how, and do not neglect yourself completely because of your dryness or anxiety of mind.

There are many, indeed, who immediately become impatient and lazy when things do not go well with them. The way of man, however, does not always lie in his own power. It is God's prerogative to give grace and to console when He wishes, as much as He wishes, and whom He wishes, as it shall please Him and no more.

Some careless persons, misusing the grace of devotion, have destroyed themselves because they wished to do more than they were able. They failed to take account of their own weakness, and followed the desire of their heart rather than the judgment of their reason. Then, because they presumed to greater things than pleased God they quickly lost His grace. They who had built their homes in heaven became helpless, vile outcasts,

humbled and impoverished, that they might learn not to fly with their own wings but to trust in Mine.

They who are still new and inexperienced in the way of the Lord may easily be deceived and overthrown unless they guide themselves by the advice of discreet persons. But if they wish to follow their own notions rather than to trust in others who are more experienced, they will be in danger of a sorry end, at least if they are unwilling to be drawn from their vanity. Seldom do they who are wise in their own conceits bear humbly the guidance of others. Yet a little knowledge humbly and meekly pursued is better than great treasures of learning sought in vain complacency. It is better for you to have little than to have much which may become the source of pride.

He who gives himself up entirely to enjoyment acts very unwisely, for he forgets his former helplessness and that chastened fear of the Lord which dreads to lose a proffered grace. Nor is he very brave or wise who becomes too despondent in times of adversity and difficulty and thinks less confidently of Me than he should. He who wishes to be too secure in time of peace will often become too dejected and fearful in time of trial.

If you were wise enough to remain always humble and small in your own eyes, and to restrain and rule your spirit well, you would not fall so quickly into danger and offense.

When a spirit of fervor is enkindled within you, you may well meditate on how you will feel when the fervor leaves. Then, when this happens, remember that the light which I have withdrawn for a time as a warning to you and for My own glory may again return. Such trials are often more beneficial than if you had things always as you wish. For a man's merits are not measured by many visions or consolations, or by knowledge of the Scriptures, or by his being in a higher position than others, but by the truth of his humility, by his capacity for divine charity, by his constancy in seeking purely and entirely the honor of God, by his disregard and positive contempt of self, and more, by preferring to be despised and humiliated rather than honored by others.

The Eighth Chapter

Self-Abasement in the Sight of God

The Disciple

I WILL speak to my Lord, I who am but dust and ashes. If I consider myself anything more than this, behold You stand against me, and my sins bear witness to the truth which I cannot contradict. If I abase myself, however, if I humble myself to nothingness, if I shrink from all self-esteem and account myself as the dust which I am, Your grace will favor me, Your light will enshroud my heart, and all self-esteem, no matter how little, will sink in the depths of my nothingness to perish forever.

It is there You show me to myself—what I am, what I have been, and what I am coming to; for I am nothing and I did not know it. Left to myself, I am nothing but total weakness. But if You look upon me for an instant, I am at once made strong and filled with new joy. Great wonder it is that I, who of my own weight always sink to the depths, am so suddenly lifted up, and so graciously embraced by You.

It is Your love that does this, graciously upholding me, supporting me in so many necessities, guarding me from so many grave dangers, and snatching me, as I may truly say, from evils without number. Indeed, by loving myself badly I lost myself; by seeking only You and by truly loving You I have found both myself and You, and by that love I have reduced myself more profoundly to nothing. For You, O sweetest Lord, deal with me above all my merits and above all that I dare to hope or ask.

May You be blessed, my God, for although I am unworthy of any benefits, yet Your nobility and infinite goodness never cease to do good even for those who are ungrateful and far from You. Convert us to You, that

we may be thankful, humble, and devout, for You are our salvation, our courage, and our strength.

The Ninth Chapter

All Things should be Referred to God as their Last End

The Voice of Christ

MY CHILD, I must be your supreme and last end, if you truly desire to be blessed. With this intention your affections, which are too often perversely inclined to self and to creatures, will be purified. For if you seek yourself in anything, you immediately fail interiorly and become dry of heart.

Refer all things principally to Me, therefore, for it is I Who have given them all. Consider each thing as flowing from the highest good, and therefore to Me, as to their highest source, must all things be brought back.

From Me the small and the great, the poor and the rich draw the water of life as from a living fountain, and they who serve Me willingly and freely shall receive grace upon grace. He who wishes to glory in things apart from Me, however, or to delight in some good as his own, shall not be grounded in true joy or gladdened in his heart, but shall be burdened and distressed in many ways. Hence you ought not to attribute any good to yourself or ascribe virtue to any man, but give all to God without Whom man has nothing.

I have given all things. I will that all be returned to Me again, and I exact most strictly a return of thanks. This is the truth by which vainglory is put to flight.

Where heavenly grace and true charity enter in, there neither envy nor narrowness of heart nor self-love will have place. Divine love conquers all and enlarges the powers of the soul.

If you are truly wise, you will rejoice only in Me, because no one is good except God alone, Who is to be praised above all things and above all to be

blessed.

The Tenth Chapter

To Despise the World and Serve God is Sweet

The Disciple

NOW again I will speak, Lord, and will not be silent. I will speak to the hearing of my God, my Lord, and my King Who is in heaven. How great, O Lord, is the multitude of Your mercies which You have stored up for those who love You. But what are You to those who love You? What are You to those who serve You with their whole heart?

Truly beyond the power of words is the sweetness of contemplation You give to those who love You. To me You have shown the sweetness of Your charity, especially in having made me when I did not exist, in having brought me back to serve You when I had gone far astray from You, in having commanded me to love You.

O Fountain of unceasing love, what shall I say of You? How can I forget You, Who have been pleased to remember me even after I had wasted away and perished? You have shown mercy to Your servant beyond all hope, and have exhibited grace and friendship beyond his deserving.

What return shall I make to You for this grace? For it is not given every man to forsake all things, to renounce the world, and undertake the religious life. Is it anything great that I should serve You Whom every creature is bound to serve? It should not seem much to me; instead it should appear great and wonderful that You condescend to receive into Your service one who is so poor and unworthy. Behold, all things are Yours, even those which I have and by which I serve You. Behold, heaven and earth which You created for the service of man, stand ready, and each day they do whatever You command. But even this is little, for You have appointed

angels also to minister to man—yea more than all this—You Yourself have condescended to serve man and have promised to give him Yourself.

What return shall I make for all these thousands of benefits? Would that I could serve You all the days of my life! Would that for but one day I could serve You worthily! Truly You are worthy of all service, all honor, and everlasting praise. Truly You are my Lord, and I am Your poor servant, bound to serve You with all my powers, praising You without ever becoming weary. I wish to do this—this is my desire. Do You supply whatever is wanting in me.

It is a great honor, a great glory to serve You and to despise all things for Your sake. They who give themselves gladly to Your most holy service will possess great grace. They who cast aside all carnal delights for Your love will find the most sweet consolation of the Holy Ghost. They who enter upon the narrow way for Your name and cast aside all worldly care will attain great freedom of mind.

O sweet and joyful service of God, which makes man truly free and holy! O sacred state of religious bondage which makes man equal to the angels, pleasing to God, terrible to the demons, and worthy of the commendation of all the faithful! O service to be embraced and always desired, in which the highest good is offered and joy is won which shall remain forever!

The Eleventh Chapter

The Longings of our Hearts Must Be Examined And Moderated

The Voice of Christ

MY CHILD, it is necessary for you to learn many things which you have not yet learned well.

The Disciple

What are they, Lord?

The Voice of Christ

That you conform your desires entirely according to My good pleasure, and be not a lover of self but an earnest doer of My will. Desires very often inflame you and drive you madly on, but consider whether you act for My honor, or for your own advantage. If I am the cause, you will be well content with whatever I ordain. If, on the other hand, any self-seeking lurk in you, it troubles you and weighs you down. Take care, then, that you do not rely too much on preconceived desire that has no reference to Me, lest you repent later on and be displeased with what at first pleased you and which you desired as being for the best. Not every desire which seems good should be followed immediately, nor, on the other hand, should every contrary affection be at once rejected.

It is sometimes well to use a little restraint even in good desires and inclinations, lest through too much eagerness you bring upon yourself distraction of mind; lest through your lack of discipline you create scandal for others; or lest you be suddenly upset and fall because of resistance from

others. Sometimes, however, you must use violence and resist your sensual appetite bravely. You must pay no attention to what the flesh does or does not desire, taking pains that it be subjected, even by force, to the spirit. And it should be chastised and forced to remain in subjection until it is prepared for anything and is taught to be satisfied with little, to take pleasure in simple things, and not to murmur against inconveniences.

The Twelfth Chapter

Acquiring Patience in the Fight Against Concupiscence

The Disciple

PATIENCE, O Lord God, is very necessary for me, I see, because there are many adversities in this life. No matter what plans I make for my own peace, my life cannot be free from struggle and sorrow.

The Voice of Christ

My child, you are right, yet My wish is not that you seek that peace which is free from temptations or meets with no opposition, but rather that you consider yourself as having found peace when you have been tormented with many tribulations and tried with many adversities.

If you say that you cannot suffer much, how will you endure the fire of purgatory? Of two evils, the lesser is always to be chosen. Therefore, in order that you may escape the everlasting punishments to come, try to bear present evils patiently for the sake of God.

Do you think that men of the world have no suffering, or perhaps but little? Ask even those who enjoy the most delights and you will learn otherwise. "But," you will say, "they enjoy many pleasures and follow their own wishes; therefore they do not feel their troubles very much." Granted that they do have whatever they wish, how long do you think it will last? Behold, they who prosper in the world shall perish as smoke, and there shall be no memory of their past joys. Even in this life they do not find rest in these pleasures without bitterness, weariness, and fear. For they often receive the penalty of sorrow from the very thing whence they believe their

happiness comes. And it is just. Since they seek and follow after pleasures without reason, they should not enjoy them without shame and bitterness.

How brief, how false, how unreasonable and shameful all these pleasures are! Yet in their drunken blindness men do not understand this, but like brute beasts incur death of soul for the miserly enjoyment of a corruptible life.

Therefore, My child, do not pursue your lusts, but turn away from your own will. "Seek thy pleasure in the Lord and He will give thee thy heart's desires." If you wish to be truly delighted and more abundantly comforted by Me, behold, in contempt of all worldly things and in the cutting off of all base pleasures shall your blessing be, and great consolation shall be given you. Further, the more you withdraw yourself from any solace of creatures, the sweeter and stronger comfort will you find in Me.

At first you will not gain these blessings without sadness and toil and conflict. Habit already formed will resist you, but it shall be overcome by a better habit. The flesh will murmur against you, but it will be bridled by fervor of spirit. The old serpent will sting and trouble you, but prayer will put him to flight and by steadfast, useful toil the way will be closed to him.

The Thirteenth Chapter

The Obedience of One Humbly Subject to the Example of Jesus Christ

The Voice of Christ

MY CHILD, he who attempts to escape obeying withdraws himself from grace. Likewise he who seeks private benefits for himself loses those which are common to all. He who does not submit himself freely and willingly to his superior, shows that his flesh is not yet perfectly obedient but that it often rebels and murmurs against him.

Learn quickly, then, to submit yourself to your superior if you wish to conquer your own flesh. For the exterior enemy is more quickly overcome if the inner man is not laid waste. There is no more troublesome, no worse enemy of the soul than you yourself, if you are not in harmony with the spirit. It is absolutely necessary that you conceive a true contempt for yourself if you wish to be victorious over flesh and blood.

Because you still love yourself too inordinately, you are afraid to resign yourself wholly to the will of others. Is it such a great matter if you, who are but dust and nothingness, subject yourself to man for the sake of God, when I, the All-Powerful, the Most High, Who created all things out of nothing, humbly subjected Myself to man for your sake? I became the most humble and the lowest of all men that you might overcome your pride with My humility.

Learn to obey, you who are but dust! Learn to humble yourself, you who are but earth and clay, and bow down under the foot of every man! Learn to break your own will, to submit to all subjection! Be zealous against yourself! Allow no pride to dwell in you, but prove yourself so humble and

lowly that all may walk over you and trample upon you as dust in the streets!

What have you, vain man, to complain of? What answer can you make, vile sinner, to those who accuse you, you who have so often offended God and so many times deserved hell? But My eye has spared you because your soul was precious in My sight, so that you might know My love and always be thankful for My benefits, so that you might give yourself continually to true subjection and humility, and might patiently endure contempt.

The Fourteenth Chapter

Consider the Hidden Judgments of God Lest You Become Proud of Your Own Good Deeds

The Disciple

YOU thunder forth Your judgments over me, Lord. You shake all my bones with fear and trembling, and my soul is very much afraid. I stand in awe as I consider that the heavens are not pure in Your sight. If You found wickedness in the angels and did not spare them, what will become of me? Stars have fallen from heaven, and I—I who am but dust—how can I be presumptuous? They whose deeds seemed worthy of praise have fallen into the depths, and I have seen those who ate the bread of angels delighting themselves with the husks of swine.

There is no holiness, then, if You withdraw Your hand, Lord. There is no wisdom if You cease to guide, no courage if You cease to defend. No chastity is secure if You do not guard it. Our vigilance avails nothing if Your holy watchfulness does not protect us. Left to ourselves we sink and perish, but visited by You we are lifted up and live. We are truly unstable, but You make us strong. We grow lukewarm, but You inflame us.

Oh, how humbly and lowly should I consider myself! How very little should I esteem anything that seems good in me! How profoundly should I submit to Your unfathomable judgments, Lord, where I find myself to be but nothing!

O immeasurable weight! O impassable sea, where I find myself to be nothing but bare nothingness! Where, then, is glory's hiding place? Where

can there be any trust in my own virtue? All vainglory is swallowed up in the depths of Your judgments upon me.

What is all flesh in Your sight? Shall the clay glory against Him that formed it? How can he whose heart is truly subject to God be lifted up by vainglory? The whole world will not make him proud whom truth has subjected to itself. Nor shall he who has placed all his hope in God be moved by the tongues of flatterers. For behold, even they who speak are nothing; they will pass away with the sound of their words, but the truth of the Lord remains forever.

The Fifteenth Chapter

How One Should Feel and Speak on Every Desirable Thing

The Voice of Christ

MY CHILD, this is the way you must speak on every occasion: “Lord, if it be pleasing to You, so be it. If it be to Your honor, Lord, be it done in Your name. Lord, if You see that it is expedient and profitable for me, then grant that I may use it to Your honor. But if You know that it will be harmful to me, and of no good benefit to the welfare of my soul, then take this desire away from me.”

Not every desire is from the Holy Spirit, even though it may seem right and good. It is difficult to be certain whether it is a good spirit or a bad one that prompts one to this or that, and even to know whether you are being moved by your own spirit. Many who seemed at first to be led by a good spirit have been deceived in the end.

Whatever the mind sees as good, ask and desire in fear of God and humility of heart. Above all, commit the whole matter to Me with true resignation, and say: “Lord, You know what is better for me; let this be done or that be done as You please. Grant what You will, as much as You will, when You will. Do with me as You know best, as will most please You, and will be for Your greater honor. Place me where You will and deal with me freely in all things. I am in Your hand; turn me about whichever way You will. Behold, I am Your servant, ready to obey in all things. Not for myself do I desire to live, but for You—would that I could do this worthily and perfectly!”

A Prayer that the Will of God Be Done

Grant me Your grace, O most merciful Jesus, that it may be with me, and work with me, and remain with me to the very end. Grant that I may always desire and will that which is most acceptable and pleasing to You. Let Your will be mine. Let my will always follow Yours and agree perfectly with it. Let my will be one with Yours in willing and in not willing, and let me be unable to will or not will anything but what You will or do not will. Grant that I may die to all things in this world, and for Your sake love to be despised and unknown in this life. Give me above all desires the desire to rest in You, and in You let my heart have peace. You are true peace of heart. You alone are its rest. Without You all things are difficult and troubled. In this peace, the selfsame that is in You, the Most High, the everlasting Good, I will sleep and take my rest. Amen.

The Sixteenth Chapter

True Comfort Is to Be Sought in God Alone

The Disciple

WHATEVER I can desire or imagine for my own comfort I look for not here but hereafter. For if I alone should have all the world's comforts and could enjoy all its delights, it is certain that they could not long endure. Therefore, my soul, you cannot enjoy full consolation or perfect delight except in God, the Consoler of the poor and the Helper of the humble. Wait a little, my soul, wait for the divine promise and you will have an abundance of all good things in heaven. If you desire these present things too much, you will lose those which are everlasting and heavenly. Use temporal things but desire eternal things. You cannot be satisfied with any temporal goods because you were not created to enjoy them.

Even if you possessed all created things you could not be happy and blessed; for in God, Who created all these things, your whole blessedness and happiness consists—not indeed such happiness as is seen and praised by lovers of the world, but such as that for which the good and faithful servants of Christ wait, and of which the spiritual and pure of heart, whose conversation is in heaven, sometime have a foretaste.

Vain and brief is all human consolation. But that which is received inwardly from the Truth is blessed and true. The devout man carries his Consoler, Jesus, everywhere with him, and he says to Him: “Be with me, Lord Jesus, in every place and at all times. Let this be my consolation, to be willing to forego all human comforting. And if Your consolation be wanting to me, let Your will and just trial of me be my greatest comfort. For You will not always be angry, nor will You threaten forever.”

The Seventeenth Chapter

All Our Care is to Be Placed in God

The Voice of Christ

MY CHILD, allow me to do what I will with you. I know what is best for you. You think as a man; you feel in many things as human affection persuades.

The Disciple

Lord, what You say is true. Your care for me is greater than all the care I can take of myself. For he who does not cast all his care upon You stands very unsafely. If only my will remain right and firm toward You, Lord, do with me whatever pleases You. For whatever You shall do with me can only be good.

If You wish me to be in darkness, I shall bless You. And if You wish me to be in light, again I shall bless You. If You stoop down to comfort me, I shall bless You, and if You wish me to be afflicted, I shall bless You forever.

The Voice of Christ

My child, this is the disposition which you should have if you wish to walk with Me. You should be as ready to suffer as to enjoy. You should as willingly be destitute and poor as rich and satisfied.

The Disciple

O Lord, I shall suffer willingly for Your sake whatever You wish to send me. I am ready to accept from Your hand both good and evil alike, the sweet and the bitter together, sorrow with joy; and for all that happens to me

I am grateful. Keep me from all sin and I will fear neither death nor hell. Do not cast me out forever nor blot me out of the Book of Life, and whatever tribulation befalls will not harm me.

The Eighteenth Chapter

Temporal Sufferings Should Be Borne Patiently, After the Example of Christ

The Voice of Christ

MY CHILD, I came down from heaven for your salvation and took upon Myself your miseries, not out of necessity but out of love, that you might learn to be patient and bear the sufferings of this life without repining. From the moment of My birth to My death on the cross, suffering did not leave Me. I suffered great want of temporal goods. Often I heard many complaints against Me. Disgrace and reviling I bore with patience. For My blessings I received ingratitude, for My miracles blasphemies, and for My teaching scorn.

The Disciple

O Lord, because You were patient in life, especially in fulfilling the design of the Father, it is fitting that I, a most miserable sinner, should live patiently according to Your will, and, as long as You shall wish, bear the burden of this corruptible body for the welfare of my soul. For though this present life seems burdensome, yet by Your grace it becomes meritorious, and it is made brighter and more endurable for the weak by Your example and the pathways of the saints. But it has also more consolation than formerly under the old law when the gates of heaven were closed, when the way thereto seemed darker than now, and when so few cared to seek the eternal kingdom. The just, the elect, could not enter heaven before Your sufferings and sacred death had paid the debt.

Oh, what great thanks I owe You, Who have shown me and all the faithful the good and right way to Your everlasting kingdom! Your life is our way and in Your holy patience we come nearer to You Who are our crown. Had You not gone before and taught us, who would have cared to follow? Alas, how many would have remained far behind, had they not before their eyes Your holy example! Behold, even we who have heard of Your many miracles and teachings are still lukewarm; what would happen if we did not have such light by which to follow You?

The Nineteenth Chapter

True Patience in Suffering

The Voice of Christ

WHAT are you saying, My child? Think of My suffering and that of the saints, and cease complaining. You have not yet resisted to the shedding of blood. What you suffer is very little compared with the great things they suffered who were so strongly tempted, so severely troubled, so tried and tormented in many ways. Well may you remember, therefore, the very painful woes of others, that you may bear your own little ones the more easily. And if they do not seem so small to you, examine if perhaps your impatience is not the cause of their apparent greatness; and whether they are great or small, try to bear them all patiently. The better you dispose yourself to suffer, the more wisely you act and the greater is the reward promised you. Thus you will suffer more easily if your mind and habits are diligently trained to it.

Do not say: “I cannot bear this from such a man, nor should I suffer things of this kind, for he has done me a great wrong. He has accused me of many things of which I never thought. However, from someone else I will gladly suffer as much as I think I should.”

Such a thought is foolish, for it does not consider the virtue of patience or the One Who will reward it, but rather weighs the person and the offense committed. The man who will suffer only as much as seems good to him, who will accept suffering only from those from whom he is pleased to accept it, is not truly patient. For the truly patient man does not consider from whom the suffering comes, whether from a superior, an equal, or an inferior, whether from a good and holy person or from a perverse and unworthy one; but no matter how great an adversity befalls him, no matter

how often it comes or from whom it comes, he accepts it gratefully from the hand of God, and counts it a great gain. For with God nothing that is suffered for His sake, no matter how small, can pass without reward. Be prepared for the fight, then, if you wish to gain the victory. Without struggle you cannot obtain the crown of patience, and if you refuse to suffer you are refusing the crown. But if you desire to be crowned, fight bravely and bear up patiently. Without labor there is no rest, and without fighting, no victory.

The Disciple

O Lord, let that which seems naturally impossible to me become possible through Your grace. You know that I can suffer very little, and that I am quickly discouraged when any small adversity arises. Let the torment of tribulation suffered for Your name be pleasant and desirable to me, since to suffer and be troubled for Your sake is very beneficial for my soul.

The Twentieth Chapter

Confessing Our Weakness in the Miseries of Life

The Disciple

I WILL bring witness against myself to my injustice, and to You, O Lord, I will confess my weakness.

Often it is a small thing that makes me downcast and sad. I propose to act bravely, but when even a small temptation comes I find myself in great straits. Sometimes it is the merest trifle which gives rise to grievous temptations. When I think myself somewhat safe and when I am not expecting it, I frequently find myself almost overcome by a slight wind. Look, therefore, Lord, at my lowliness and frailty which You know so well. Have mercy on me and snatch me out of the mire that I may not be caught in it and may not remain forever utterly despondent.

That I am so prone to fall and so weak in resisting my passions oppresses me frequently and confounds me in Your sight. While I do not fully consent to them, still their assault is very troublesome and grievous to me, and it wearies me exceedingly thus to live in daily strife. Yet from the fact that abominable fancies rush in upon me much more easily than they leave, my weakness becomes clear to me.

Oh that You, most mighty God of Israel, zealous Lover of faithful souls, would consider the labor and sorrow of Your servant, and assist him in all his undertakings! Strengthen me with heavenly courage lest the outer man, the miserable flesh, against which I shall be obliged to fight so long as I draw a breath in this wretched life and which is not yet subjected to the spirit, prevail and dominate me.

Alas! What sort of life is this, from which troubles and miseries are never absent, where all things are full of snares and enemies? For when one trouble or temptation leaves, another comes. Indeed, even while the first conflict is still raging, many others begin unexpectedly. How is it possible to love a life that has such great bitterness, that is subject to so many calamities and miseries? Indeed, how can it even be called life when it begets so many deaths and plagues? And yet, it is loved, and many seek their delight in it.

Many persons often blame the world for being false and vain, yet do not readily give it up because the desires of the flesh have such great power. Some things draw them to love the world, others make them despise it. The lust of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, and the pride of life lead to love, while the pains and miseries, which are the just consequences of those things, beget hatred and weariness of the world.

Vicious pleasure overcomes the soul that is given to the world. She thinks that there are delights beneath these thorns, because she has never seen or tasted the sweetness of God or the internal delight of virtue. They, on the other hand, who entirely despise the world and seek to live for God under the rule of holy discipline, are not ignorant of the divine sweetness promised to those who truly renounce the world. They see clearly how gravely the world errs, and in how many ways it deceives.

The Twenty-first Chapter

Above All Goods and All Gifts We Must Rest in God

The Disciple

ABOVE all things and in all things, O my soul, rest always in God, for He is the everlasting rest of the saints.

Grant, most sweet and loving Jesus, that I may seek my repose in You above every creature; above all health and beauty; above every honor and glory; every power and dignity; above all knowledge and cleverness, all riches and arts, all joy and gladness; above all fame and praise, all sweetness and consolation; above every hope and promise, every merit and desire; above all the gifts and favors that You can give or pour down upon me; above all the joy and exultation that the mind can receive and feel; and finally, above the angels and archangels and all the heavenly host; above all things visible and invisible; and may I seek my repose in You above everything that is not You, my God.

For You, O Lord my God, are above all things the best. You alone are most high, You alone most powerful. You alone are most sufficient and most satisfying, You alone most sweet and consoling. You alone are most beautiful and loving, You alone most noble and glorious above all things. In You is every perfection that has been or ever will be. Therefore, whatever You give me besides Yourself, whatever You reveal to me concerning Yourself, and whatever You promise, is too small and insufficient when I do not see and fully enjoy You alone. For my heart cannot rest or be fully content until, rising above all gifts and every created thing, it rests in You.

Who, O most beloved Spouse, Jesus Christ, most pure Lover, Lord of all creation, who shall give me the wings of true liberty that I may fly to rest in

You? When shall freedom be fully given me to see how sweet You are, O Lord, my God? When shall I recollect myself entirely in You, so that because of Your love I may feel, not myself, but You alone above all sense and measure, in a manner known to none? But now I often lament and grieve over my unhappiness, for many evils befall me in this vale of miseries, often disturbing me, making me sad and overshadowing me, often hindering and distracting me, alluring and entangling me so that I neither have free access to You nor enjoy the sweet embraces which are ever ready for blessed souls. Let my sighs and the manifold desolation here on earth move You.

O Jesus, Splendor of eternal glory, Consolation of the pilgrim soul, with You my lips utter no sound and to You my silence speaks. How long will my Lord delay His coming? Let Him come to His poor servant and make him happy. Let Him put forth His hand and take this miserable creature from his anguish. Come, O come, for without You there will be no happy day or hour, because You are my happiness and without You my table is empty. I am wretched, as it were imprisoned and weighted down with fetters, until You fill me with the light of Your presence, restore me to liberty, and show me a friendly countenance. Let others seek instead of You whatever they will, but nothing pleases me or will please me but You, my God, my Hope, my everlasting Salvation. I will not be silent, I will not cease praying until Your grace returns to me and You speak inwardly to me, saying: "Behold, I am here. Lo, I have come to you because you have called Me. Your tears and the desire of your soul, your humility and contrition of heart have inclined Me and brought Me to you."

Lord, I have called You, and have desired You, and have been ready to spurn all things for Your sake. For You first spurred me on to seek You. May You be blessed, therefore, O Lord, for having shown this goodness to Your servant according to the multitude of Your mercies.

What more is there for Your servant to say to You unless, with his iniquity and vileness always in mind, he humbles himself before You? Nothing among all the wonders of heaven and earth is like to You. Your works are exceedingly good, Your judgments true, and Your providence rules the whole universe. May You be praised and glorified, therefore, O Wisdom of the Father. Let my lips and my soul and all created things unite to praise and bless You.

The Twenty-Second Chapter

Remember the Innumerable Gifts of God

The Disciple

OPEN my heart, O Lord, to Your law and teach me to walk in the way of Your commandments. Let me understand Your will. Let me remember Your blessings—all of them and each single one of them—with great reverence and care so that henceforth I may return worthy thanks for them. I know that I am unable to give due thanks for even the least of Your gifts. I am unworthy of the benefits You have given me, and when I consider Your generosity my spirit faints away before its greatness. All that we have of soul and body, whatever we possess interiorly or exteriorly, by nature or by grace, are Your gifts and they proclaim Your goodness and mercy from which we have received all good things.

If one receives more and another less, yet all are Yours and without You nothing can be received. He who receives greater things cannot glory in his own merit or consider himself above others or behave insolently toward those who receive less. He who attributes less to himself and is the more humble and devout in returning thanks is indeed the greater and the better, while he who considers himself lower than all men and judges himself to be the least worthy, is the more fit to receive the greater blessing.

He, on the other hand, who has received fewer gifts should not be sad or impatient or envious of the richer man. Instead he should turn his mind to You and offer You the greatest praise because You give so bountifully, so freely and willingly, without regard to persons. All things come from You; therefore, You are to be praised in all things. You know what is good for each of us; and why one should receive less and another more is not for us to judge, but for You Who have marked every man's merits.

Therefore, O Lord God, I consider it a great blessing not to have many things which human judgment holds praiseworthy and glorious, for one who realizes his own poverty and vileness should not be sad or downcast at it, but rather consoled and happy because You, O God, have chosen the poor, the humble, and the despised in this world to be Your friends and servants. The truth of this is witnessed by Your Apostles, whom You made princes over all the world. Yet they lived in this world without complaining, so humble and simple, so free from malice and deceit, that they were happy even to suffer reproach for Your name and to embrace with great affection that which the world abhors.

A man who loves You and recognizes Your benefits, therefore, should be gladdened by nothing so much as by Your will, by the good pleasure of Your eternal decree. With this he should be so contented and consoled that he would wish to be the least as others wish to be the greatest; that he would be as peaceful and satisfied in the last place as in the first, and as willing to be despised, unknown and forgotten, as to be honored by others and to have more fame than they. He should prefer Your will and the love of Your honor to all else, and it should comfort him more than all the benefits which have been, or will be, given him.

The Twenty-Third Chapter

Four Things Which Bring Great Peace

The Voice of Christ

MY CHILD, I will teach you now the way of peace and true liberty.

Seek, child, to do the will of others rather than your own.

Always choose to have less rather than more.

Look always for the last place and seek to be beneath all others.

Always wish and pray that the will of God be fully carried out in you.

Behold, such will enter into the realm of peace and rest.

The Disciple

O Lord, this brief discourse of Yours contains much perfection. It is short in words but full of meaning and abounding in fruit. Certainly if I could only keep it faithfully, I should not be so easily disturbed. For as often as I find myself troubled and dejected, I find that I have departed from this teaching. But You Who can do all things, and Who always love what is for my soul's welfare, give me increase of grace that I may keep Your words and accomplish my salvation.

A Prayer Against Bad Thoughts

O Lord my God, be not far from me. O my God, hasten to help me, for varied thoughts and great fears have risen up within me, afflicting my soul. How shall I escape them unharmed? How shall I dispel them?

“I will go before you,” says the Lord, “and will humble the great ones of earth. I will open the doors of the prison, and will reveal to you hidden secrets.”

Do as You say, Lord, and let all evil thoughts fly from Your face. This is my hope and my only comfort—to fly to You in all tribulation, to confide in

You, and to call on You from the depths of my heart and to await patiently for Your consolation.

A Prayer for Enlightening the Mind

Enlighten me, good Jesus, with the brightness of internal light, and take away all darkness from the habitation of my heart. Restrain my wandering thoughts and suppress the temptations which attack me so violently. Fight strongly for me, and vanquish these evil beasts—the alluring desires of the flesh—so that peace may come through Your power and the fullness of Your praise resound in the holy courts, which is a pure conscience. Command the winds and the tempests; say to the sea: “Be still,” and to the north wind, “Do not blow,” and there will be a great calm.

Send forth Your light and Your truth to shine on the earth, for I am as earth, empty and formless until You illumine me. Pour out Your grace from above. Shower my heart with heavenly dew. Open the springs of devotion to water the earth, that it may produce the best of good fruits. Lift up my heart pressed down by the weight of sins, and direct all my desires to heavenly things, that having tasted the sweetness of supernal happiness, I may find no pleasure in thinking of earthly things.

Snatch me up and deliver me from all the passing comfort of creatures, for no created thing can fully quiet and satisfy my desires. Join me to Yourself in an inseparable bond of love; because You alone can satisfy him who loves You, and without You all things are worthless.

The Twenty-Fourth Chapter

Avoiding Curious Inquiry About the Lives of Others

The Voice of Christ

MY CHILD, do not be curious. Do not trouble yourself with idle cares. What matters this or that to you? Follow Me. What is it to you if a man is such and such, if another does or says this or that? You will not have to answer for others, but you will have to give an account of yourself. Why, then, do you meddle in their affairs?

Behold, I know all men. I see everything that is done under the sun, and I know how matters stand with each—what is in his mind and what in his heart and the end to which his intention is directed. Commit all things to Me, therefore, and keep yourself in good peace. Let him who is disturbed be as restless as he will. Whatever he has said or done will fall upon himself, for he cannot deceive Me.

Do not be anxious for the shadow of a great name, for the close friendship of many, or for the particular affection of men. These things cause distraction and cast great darkness about the heart. I would willingly speak My word and reveal My secrets to you, if you would watch diligently for My coming and open your heart to Me. Be prudent, then. Watch in prayer, and in all things humble yourself.

The Twenty-Fifth Chapter

The Basis of Firm Peace of Heart and True Progress

The Voice of Christ

MY CHILD, I have said: “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, do I give unto you.”

All men desire peace but all do not care for the things that go to make true peace. My peace is with the humble and meek of heart: your peace will be in much patience. If you hear Me and follow My voice, you will be able to enjoy much peace.

The Disciple

What, then, shall I do, Lord?

The Voice of Christ

Watch yourself in all things, in what you do and what you say. Direct your every intention toward pleasing Me alone, and desire nothing outside of Me. Do not be rash in judging the deeds and words of others, and do not entangle yourself in affairs that are not your own. Thus, it will come about that you will be disturbed little and seldom.

Yet, never to experience any disturbance or to suffer any hurt in heart or body does not belong to this present life, but rather to the state of eternal rest. Do not think, therefore, that you have found true peace if you feel no depression, or that all is well because you suffer no opposition. Do not think that all is perfect if everything happens just as you wish. And do not imagine yourself great or consider yourself especially beloved if you are

filled with great devotion and sweetness. For the true lover of virtue is not known by these things, nor do the progress and perfection of a man consist in them.

The Disciple

In what do they consist, Lord?

The Voice of Christ

They consist in offering yourself with all your heart to the divine will, not seeking what is yours either in small matters or great ones, either in temporal or eternal things, so that you will preserve equanimity and give thanks in both prosperity and adversity, seeing all things in their proper light.

If you become so brave and long-suffering in hope that you can prepare your heart to suffer still more even when all inward consolation is withdrawn, and if you do not justify yourself as though you ought not be made to suffer such great things, but acknowledge Me to be just in all My works and praise My holy name—then you will walk in the true and right path of peace, then you may have sure hope of seeing My face again in joy. If you attain to complete contempt of self, then know that you will enjoy an abundance of peace, as much as is possible in this earthly life.

The Twenty-Sixth Chapter

The Excellence of a Free Mind, Gained Through Prayer Rather Than By Study

The Disciple

IT IS the mark of a perfect man, Lord, never to let his mind relax in attention to heavenly things, and to pass through many cares as though he had none; not as an indolent man does, but having by the certain prerogative of a free mind no disorderly affection for any created being.

Keep me, I beg You, most merciful God, from the cares of this life, lest I be too much entangled in them. Keep me from many necessities of the body, lest I be ensnared by pleasure. Keep me from all darkness of mind, lest I be broken by troubles and overcome. I do not ask deliverance from those things which worldly vanity desires so eagerly, but from those miseries which, by the common curse of humankind, oppress the soul of Your servant in punishment and keep him from entering into the liberty of spirit as often as he would.

My God, Sweetness beyond words, make bitter all the carnal comfort that draws me from love of the eternal and lures me to its evil self by the sight of some delightful good in the present. Let it not overcome me, my God. Let not flesh and blood conquer me. Let not the world and its brief glory deceive me, nor the devil trip me by his craftiness. Give me courage to resist, patience to endure, and constancy to persevere. Give me the soothing unction of Your spirit rather than all the consolations of the world, and in place of carnal love, infuse into me the love of Your name.

Behold, eating, drinking, clothing, and other necessities that sustain the body are burdensome to the fervent soul. Grant me the grace to use such comforts temperately and not to become entangled in too great a desire for

them. It is not lawful to cast them aside completely, for nature must be sustained, but Your holy law forbids us to demand superfluous things and things that are simply for pleasure, else the flesh would rebel against the spirit. In these matters, I beg, let Your hand guide and direct me, so that I may not overstep the law in any way.

The Twenty-Seventh Chapter

Self-Love is the Greatest Hindrance to the Highest Good

The Voice of Christ

MY CHILD, you should give all for all, and in no way belong to yourself. You must know that self-love is more harmful to you than anything else in the world. In proportion to the love and affection you have for a thing, it will cling to you more or less. If your love is pure, simple, and well ordered, you will not be a slave to anything. Do not covet what you may not have. Do not possess anything that can hinder you or rob you of freedom.

It is strange that you do not commit yourself to Me with your whole heart, together with all that you can desire or possess. Why are you consumed with foolish sorrow? Why are you wearied with unnecessary care? Be resigned to My will and you will suffer no loss.

If you seek this or that, if you wish to be in this place or that place, to have more ease and pleasure, you will never rest or be free from care, for some defect is found in everything and everywhere someone will vex you. To obtain and multiply earthly goods, then, will not help you, but to despise them and root them out of your heart will aid. This, understand, is true not only of money and wealth, but also of ambition for honor and desire for empty praise, all of which will pass away with this world.

The place matters little if the spirit of fervor is not there; nor will peace be lasting if it is sought from the outside; if your heart has no true foundation, that is, if you are not founded in Me, you may change, but you will not better yourself. For when occasion arises and is accepted, you will find that from which you fled and worse.

A Prayer for Cleansing the Heart and Obtaining Heavenly Wisdom

Strengthen me by the grace of Your holy spirit, O God. Give me the power to be strengthened inwardly and to empty my heart of all vain care and anxiety, so that I may not be drawn away by many desires, whether for precious things or mean ones. Let me look upon everything as passing, and upon myself as soon to pass away with them, because there is nothing lasting under the sun, where all is vanity and affliction of spirit. How wise is he who thinks thus!

Give me, Lord, heavenly wisdom to learn above all else to seek and find You, to enjoy and love You more than anything, and to consider other things as they are, as Your wisdom has ordered them. Grant me prudence to avoid the flatterer and to bear patiently with him who disagrees with me. For it is great wisdom not to be moved by the sound of words, nor to give ear to the wicked, flattering siren. Then, I shall walk safely in the way I have begun.

The Twenty-Eighth Chapter

Strength Against Slander

The Voice of Christ

MY CHILD, do not take it to heart if some people think badly of you and say unpleasant things about you. You ought to think worse things of yourself and to believe that no one is weaker than yourself. Moreover, if you walk in the spirit you will pay little heed to fleeting words. It is no small prudence to remain silent in evil times, to turn inwardly to Me, and not to be disturbed by human opinions. Do not let your peace depend on the words of men. Their thinking well or badly of you does not make you different from what you are. Where are true peace and glory? Are they not in Me? He who neither cares to please men nor fears to displease them will enjoy great peace, for all unrest and distraction of the senses arise out of disorderly love and vain fear.

The Twenty-Ninth Chapter

How We Must Call Upon and Bless the Lord When Trouble Presses

The Disciple

BLESSED be Your name forever, O Lord, Who have willed that this temptation and trouble come upon me. I cannot escape it, yet I must fly to You that You may help me and turn it to my good. Now I am troubled, Lord, and my heart is not at rest, for I am greatly afflicted by this present suffering.

Beloved Father, what shall I say? I am straitened in harsh ways. Save me from this hour to which, however, I am come that You may be glorified when I am deeply humbled and freed by You. May it please You, then, to deliver me, Lord, for what can I, poor wretch that I am, do or where can I go without You? Give me patience, Lord, even now. Help me, my God, and I will not be afraid however much I may be distressed.

But here, in the midst of these troubles, what shall I say? Your will be done, Lord. I have richly deserved to be troubled and distressed. But I must bear it. Would that I could do so patiently, until the storm passes and calm returns! Yet Your almighty hand can take this temptation from me, or lighten its attack so that I do not altogether sink beneath it, as You, my God, my Mercy, have very often done for me before. And the more difficult my plight, the easier for You is this change of the right hand of the Most High.

The Thirtieth Chapter

The Quest of Divine Help and Confidence in Regaining Grace

The Voice of Christ

MY CHILD, I am the Lord Who gives strength in the day of trouble. Come to Me when all is not well with you. Your tardiness in turning to prayer is the greatest obstacle to heavenly consolation, for before you pray earnestly to Me you first seek many comforts and take pleasure in outward things. Thus, all things are of little profit to you until you realize that I am the one Who saves those who trust in Me, and that outside of Me there is no worthwhile help, or any useful counsel or lasting remedy.

But now, after the tempest, take courage, grow strong once more in the light of My mercies; for I am near, says the Lord, to restore all things not only to the full but with abundance and above measure. Is anything difficult for Me? Or shall I be as one who promises and does not act? Where is your faith? Stand firm and persevere. Be a man of endurance and courage, and consolation will come to you in due time. Wait for Me; wait—and I will come to heal you.

It is only a temptation that troubles you, a vain fear that terrifies you.

Of what use is anxiety about the future? Does it bring you anything but trouble upon trouble? Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof. It is foolish and useless to be either grieved or happy about future things which perhaps may never happen. But it is human to be deluded by such imaginations, and the sign of a weak soul to be led on by suggestions of the enemy. For he does not care whether he overcomes you by love of the present or fear of the future.

Let not your heart be troubled, therefore, nor let it be afraid. Believe in Me and trust in My mercy. When you think you are far from Me, then often I am very near you. When you judge that almost all is lost, then very often you are in the way of gaining great merit.

All is not lost when things go contrary to your wishes. You ought not judge according to present feelings, nor give in to any trouble whenever it comes, or take it as though all hope of escape were lost. And do not consider yourself forsaken if I send some temporary hardship, or withdraw the consolation you desire. For this is the way to the kingdom of heaven, and without doubt it is better for you and the rest of My servants to be tried in adversities than to have all things as you wish. I know your secret thoughts, and I know that it is profitable for your salvation to be left sometimes in despondency lest perhaps you be puffed up by success and fancy yourself to be what you are not.

What I have given, I can take away and restore when it pleases Me. What I give remains Mine, and thus when I take it away I take nothing that is yours, for every good gift and every perfect gift is Mine.

If I send you trouble and adversity, do not fret or let your heart be downcast. I can raise you quickly up again and turn all your sorrow into joy. I am no less just and worthy of great praise when I deal with you in this way.

If you think aright and view things in their true light, you should never be so dejected and saddened by adversity, but rather rejoice and give thanks, considering it a matter of special joy that I afflict you with sorrow and do not spare you. “As the Father hath loved Me, so also I love you,” I said to My disciples, and I certainly did not send them out to temporal joys but rather to great struggles, not to honors but to contempt, not to idleness, but to labors, not to rest but to bring forth much fruit in patience. Do you, My child, remember these words.

The Thirty-First Chapter

To Find the Creator, Forsake All Creatures

The Disciple

O LORD, I am in sore need still of greater grace if I am to arrive at the point where no man and no created thing can be an obstacle to me. For as long as anything holds me back, I cannot freely fly to You. He that said “Oh that I had wings like a dove, that I might fly away and be at rest!” desired to fly freely to You. Who is more at rest than he who aims at nothing but God? And who more free than the man who desires nothing on earth?

It is well, then, to pass over all creation, perfectly to abandon self, and to see in ecstasy of mind that You, the Creator of all, have no likeness among all Your creatures, and that unless a man be freed from all creatures, he cannot attend freely to the Divine. The reason why so few contemplative persons are found, is that so few know how to separate themselves entirely from what is transitory and created.

For this, indeed, great grace is needed, grace that will raise the soul and lift it up above itself. Unless a man be elevated in spirit, free from all creatures, and completely united to God, all his knowledge and possessions are of little moment. He who considers anything great except the one, immense, eternal good will long be little and lie groveling on the earth. Whatever is not God is nothing and must be accounted as nothing.

There is great difference between the wisdom of an enlightened and devout man and the learning of a well-read and brilliant scholar, for the knowledge which flows down from divine sources is much nobler than that laboriously acquired by human industry.

Many there are who desire contemplation, but who do not care to do the things which contemplation requires. It is also a great obstacle to be

satisfied with externals and sensible things, and to have so little of perfect mortification. I know not what it is, or by what spirit we are led, or to what we pretend—we who wish to be called spiritual—that we spend so much labor and even more anxiety on things that are transitory and mean, while we seldom or never advert with full consciousness to our interior concerns.

Alas, after very little recollection we falter, not weighing our deeds by strict examination. We pay no attention to where our affections lie, nor do we deplore the fact that our actions are impure.

Remember that because all flesh had corrupted its course, the great deluge followed. Since, then, our interior affection is corrupt, it must be that the action which follows from it, the index as it were of our lack of inward strength, is also corrupt. Out of a pure heart come the fruits of a good life.

People are wont to ask how much a man has done, but they think little of the virtue with which he acts. They ask: Is he strong? rich? handsome? a good writer? a good singer? or a good worker? They say little, however, about how poor he is in spirit, how patient and meek, how devout and spiritual. Nature looks to his outward appearance; grace turns to his inward being. The one often errs, the other trusts in God and is not deceived.

The Thirty-Second Chapter

Self-Denial and the Renunciation of Evil Appetites

The Voice of Christ

MY CHILD, you can never be perfectly free unless you completely renounce self, for all who seek their own interest and who love themselves are bound in fetters. They are unsettled by covetousness and curiosity, always searching for ease and not for the things of Christ, often devising and framing that which will not last, for anything that is not of God will fail completely.

Hold to this short and perfect advice, therefore: give up your desires and you will find rest. Think upon it in your heart, and when you have put it into practice you will understand all things.

The Disciple

But this, Lord, is not the work of one day, nor is it mere child's play; indeed, in this brief sentence is included all the perfection of holy persons.

The Voice of Christ

My child, you should not turn away or be downcast when you hear the way of the perfect. Rather you ought to be spurred on the more toward their sublime heights, or at least be moved to seek perfection.

I would this were the case with you—that you had progressed to the point where you no longer loved self but simply awaited My bidding and his whom I have placed as father over you. Then you would please Me very much, and your whole life would pass in peace and joy. But you have yet

many things which you must give up, and unless you resign them entirely to Me you will not obtain that which you ask.

“I counsel thee to buy of me gold, fire-tried, that thou mayest be made rich”—rich in heavenly wisdom which treads underfoot all that is low. Put aside earthly wisdom, all human self-complacency.

I have said: exchange what is precious and valued among men for that which is considered contemptible. For true heavenly wisdom—not to think highly of self and not to seek glory on earth—does indeed seem mean and small and is well-nigh forgotten, as many men praise it with their mouths but shy far away from it in their lives. Yet this heavenly wisdom is a pearl of great price, which is hidden from many.

The Thirty-Third Chapter

Restlessness of Soul—Directing Our Final Intention Toward God

The Voice of Christ

MY CHILD, do not trust in your present feeling, for it will soon give way to another. As long as you live you will be subject to changeableness in spite of yourself. You will become merry at one time and sad at another, now peaceful but again disturbed, at one moment devout and the next indevout, sometimes diligent while at other times lazy, now grave and again flippant.

But the man who is wise and whose spirit is well instructed stands superior to these changes. He pays no attention to what he feels in himself or from what quarter the wind of fickleness blows, so long as the whole intention of his mind is conducive to his proper and desired end. For thus he can stand undivided, unchanged, and unshaken, with the singleness of his intention directed unwaveringly toward Me, even in the midst of so many changing events. And the purer this singleness of intention is, with so much the more constancy does he pass through many storms.

But in many ways the eye of pure intention grows dim, because it is attracted to any delightful thing that it meets. Indeed, it is rare to find one who is entirely free from all taint of self-seeking. The Jews of old, for example, came to Bethany to Martha and Mary, not for Jesus' sake alone, but in order to see Lazarus.

The eye of your intention, therefore, must be cleansed so that it is single and right. It must be directed toward Me, despite all the objects which may interfere.

The Thirty-Fourth Chapter

God is Sweet Above All Things and in All Things to Those Who Love Him

The Disciple

BEHOLD, my God and my all! What more do I wish for; what greater happiness can I desire? O sweet and delicious word! But sweet only to him who loves it, and not to the world or the things that are in the world.

My God and my all! These words are enough for him who understands, and for him who loves it is a joy to repeat them often. For when You are present, all things are delightful; when You are absent, all things become loathsome. It is You Who give a heart tranquillity, great peace and festive joy. It is You Who make us think well of all things, and praise You in all things. Without You nothing can give pleasure for very long, for if it is to be pleasing and tasteful, Your grace and the seasoning of Your wisdom must be in it. What is there that can displease him whose happiness is in You? And, on the contrary, what can satisfy him whose delight is not in You?

The wise men of the world, the men who lust for the flesh, are wanting in Your wisdom, because in the world is found the utmost vanity, and in the flesh is death. But they who follow You by disdaining worldly things and mortifying the flesh are known to be truly wise, for they are transported from vanity to truth, from flesh to spirit. By such as these God is relished, and whatever good is found in creatures they turn to praise of the Creator. But great—yes, very great, indeed—is the difference between delight in the Creator and in the creature, in eternity and in time, in Light uncreated and in the light that is reflected.

O Light eternal, surpassing all created brightness, flash forth the lightning from above and enlighten the inmost recesses of my heart. Cleanse, cheer,

enlighten, and vivify my spirit with all its powers, that it may cleave to You in ecstasies of joy. Oh, when will that happy and wished-for hour come, that You may fill me with Your presence and become all in all to me? So long as this is not given me, my joy will not be complete.

The old man, alas, yet lives within me. He has not yet been entirely crucified; he is not yet entirely dead. He still lusts strongly against the spirit, and he will not leave the kingdom of my soul in peace. But You, Who can command the power of the sea and calm the tumult of its waves, arise and help me. Scatter the nations that delight in war; crush them in Your sight. Show forth I beg, Your wonderful works and let Your right hand be glorified, because for me there is no other hope or refuge except in You, O Lord, my God.

The Thirty-Fifth Chapter

There is No Security from Temptation in This Life

The Voice of Christ

MY CHILD, in this life you are never safe, and as long as you live the weapons of the spirit will ever be necessary to you. You dwell among enemies. You are subject to attack from the right and the left. If, therefore, you do not guard yourself from every quarter with the shield of patience, you will not remain long unscathed.

Moreover, if you do not steadily set your heart on Me, with a firm will to suffer everything for My sake, you will not be able to bear the heat of this battle or to win the crown of the blessed. You ought, therefore, to pass through all these things bravely and to oppose a strong hand to whatever stands in your way. For to him who triumphs heavenly bread is given, while for him who is too lazy to fight there remains much misery.

If you look for rest in this life, how will you attain to everlasting rest? Dispose yourself, then, not for much rest but for great patience. Seek true peace, not on earth but in heaven; not in men or in other creatures but in God alone. For love of God you should undergo all things cheerfully, all labors and sorrows, temptations and trials, anxieties, weaknesses, necessities, injuries, slanders, rebukes, humiliations, confusions, corrections, and contempt. For these are helps to virtue. These are the trials of Christ's recruit. These form the heavenly crown. For a little brief labor I will give an everlasting crown, and for passing confusion, glory that is eternal.

Do you think that you will always have spiritual consolations as you desire? My saints did not always have them. Instead, they had many

afflictions, temptations of various kinds, and great desolation. Yet they bore them all patiently. They placed their confidence in God rather than in themselves, knowing that the sufferings of this life are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to come. And you—do you wish to have at once that which others have scarcely obtained after many tears and great labors?

Wait for the Lord, act bravely, and have courage. Do not lose trust. Do not turn back but devote your body and soul constantly to God's glory. I will reward you most plentifully. I will be with you in every tribulation.

The Thirty-Sixth Chapter

The Vain Judgments of Men

The Voice of Christ

MY CHILD, trust firmly in the Lord, and do not fear the judgment of men when conscience tells you that you are upright and innocent. For it is good and blessed to suffer such things, and they will not weigh heavily on the humble heart that trusts in God rather than in itself. Many men say many things, and therefore little faith is to be put in them.

Likewise, it is impossible to satisfy all men. Although Paul tried to please all in the Lord, and became all things to all men, yet he made little of their opinions. He labored abundantly for the edification and salvation of others, as much as lay in him and as much as he could, but he could not escape being sometimes judged and despised by others. Therefore, he committed all to God Who knows all things, and defended himself by his patience and humility against the tongues of those who spoke unjustly or thought foolish things and lies, or made accusations against him. Sometimes, indeed, he did answer them, but only lest his silence scandalize the weak.

Who are you, then, that you should be afraid of mortal man? Today he is here, tomorrow he is not seen. Fear God and you will not be afraid of the terrors of men. What can anyone do to you by word or injury? He hurts himself rather than you, and no matter who he may be he cannot escape the judgment of God. Keep God before your eyes, therefore, and do not quarrel with peevish words.

If it seems, then, that you are worsted and that you suffer undeserved shame, do not repine over it and do not lessen your crown by impatience. Look instead to heaven, to Me, Who have power to deliver you from all disgrace and injury, and to render to everyone according to his works.

The Thirty-Seventh Chapter

Pure and Entire Resignation of Self to Obtain Freedom of Heart

The Voice of Christ

MY CHILD, renounce self and you shall find Me. Give up your own self-will, your possessions, and you shall always gain. For once you resign yourself irrevocably, greater grace will be given you.

The Disciple

How often, Lord, shall I resign myself? And in what shall I forsake myself?

The Voice of Christ

Always, at every hour, in small matters as well as great—I except nothing. In all things I wish you to be stripped of self. How otherwise can you be mine or I yours unless you be despoiled of your own will both inwardly and outwardly? The sooner you do this the better it will be for you, and the more fully and sincerely you do it the more you will please Me and the greater gain you will merit.

Some there are who resign themselves, but with certain reservation; they do not trust fully in God and therefore they try to provide for themselves. Others, again, at first offer all, but afterward are assailed by temptation and return to what they have renounced, thereby making no progress in virtue. These will not reach the true liberty of a pure heart nor the grace of happy friendship with Me unless they first make a full resignation and a daily sacrifice of themselves. Without this no fruitful union lasts nor will last.

I have said to you very often, and now I say again: forsake yourself, renounce yourself and you shall enjoy great inward peace. Give all for all. Ask nothing, demand nothing in return. Trust purely and without hesitation in Me, and you shall possess Me. You will be free of heart and darkness will not overwhelm you.

Strive for this, pray for this, desire this—to be stripped of all selfishness and naked to follow the naked Jesus, to die to self and live forever for Me. Then all vain imaginations, all wicked disturbances and superfluous cares will vanish. Then also immoderate fear will leave you and inordinate love will die.

The Thirty-Eighth Chapter

The Right Ordering of External Affairs; Recourse to God in Dangers

The Voice of Christ

MY CHILD, you must strive diligently to be inwardly free, to have mastery over yourself everywhere, in every external act and occupation, that all things be subject to you and not you to them, that you be the master and director of your actions, not a slave or a mere hired servant. You should be rather a free man and a true Hebrew, arising to the status and freedom of the children of God who stand above present things to contemplate those which are eternal; who look upon passing affairs with the left eye and upon those of heaven with the right; whom temporal things do not so attract that they cling to them, but who rather put these things to such proper service as is ordained and instituted by God, the great Workmaster, Who leaves nothing unordered in His creation.

If, likewise, in every happening you are not content simply with outward appearances, if you do not regard with carnal eyes things which you see and hear, but whatever be the affair, enter with Moses into the tabernacle to ask advice of the Lord, you will sometimes hear the divine answer and return instructed in many things present and to come. For Moses always had recourse to the tabernacle for the solution of doubts and questions, and fled to prayer for support in dangers and the evil deeds of men. So you also should take refuge in the secret chamber of your heart, begging earnestly for divine aid.

For this reason, as we read, Joshua and the children of Israel were deceived by the Gibeonites because they did not first seek counsel of the

Lord, but trusted too much in fair words and hence were deceived by false piety.

The Thirty-Ninth Chapter

A Man Should Not Be Unduly Solicitous About His Affairs

The Voice of Christ

MY CHILD, always commit your cause to Me. I will dispose of it rightly in good time. Await My ordering of it and it will be to your advantage.

The Disciple

Lord, I willingly commit all things to You, for my anxiety can profit me little. But I would that I were not so concerned about the future, and instead offered myself without hesitation to Your good pleasure.

The Voice of Christ

My child, it often happens that a man seeks ardently after something he desires and then when he has attained it he begins to think that it is not at all desirable; for affections do not remain fixed on the same thing, but rather flit from one to another. It is no very small matter, therefore, for a man to forsake himself even in things that are very small.

A man's true progress consists in denying himself, and the man who has denied himself is truly free and secure. The old enemy, however, setting himself against all good, never ceases to tempt them, but day and night plots dangerous snares to cast the unwary into the net of deceit. "Watch ye and pray," says the Lord, "that ye enter not into temptation."

The Fortieth Chapter

Man Has No Good in Himself and Can Glory in Nothing

The Disciple

LORD, what is man that You are mindful of him, or the son of man that You visit him? What has man deserved that You should give him Your grace? What cause have I, Lord, to complain if You desert me, or what objection can I have if You do not do what I ask? This I may think and say in all truth: “Lord, I am nothing, of myself I have nothing that is good; I am lacking in all things, and I am ever tending toward nothing. And unless I have Your help and am inwardly strengthened by You, I become quite lukewarm and lax.”

But You, Lord, are always the same. You remain forever, always good, just, and holy; doing all things rightly, justly, and holily, disposing them wisely. I, however, who am more ready to go backward than forward, do not remain always in one state, for I change with the seasons. Yet my condition quickly improves when it pleases You and when You reach forth Your helping hand. For You alone, without human aid, can help me and strengthen me so greatly that my heart shall no more change but be converted and rest solely in You. Hence, if I knew well how to cast aside all earthly consolation, either to attain devotion or because of the necessity which, in the absence of human solace, compels me to seek You alone, then I could deservedly hope for Your grace and rejoice in the gift of new consolation.

Thanks be to You from Whom all things come, whenever it is well with me. In Your sight I am vanity and nothingness, a weak, unstable man. In what, therefore, can I glory, and how can I wish to be highly regarded? Is it

because I am nothing? This, too, is utterly vain. Indeed, the greatest vanity is the evil plague of empty self-glory, because it draws one away from true glory and robs one of heavenly grace. For when a man is pleased with himself he displeases You, when he pants after human praise he is deprived of true virtue. But it is true glory and holy exultation to glory in You and not in self, to rejoice in Your name rather than in one's own virtue, and not to delight in any creature except for Your sake.

Let Your name, not mine, be praised. Let Your work, not mine, be magnified. Let Your holy name be blessed, but let no human praise be given to me. You are my glory. You are the joy of my heart. In You I will glory and rejoice all the day, and for myself I will glory in nothing but my infirmities.

Let the Jews seek the glory that comes from another. I will seek that which comes from God alone. All human glory, all temporal honor, all worldly position is truly vanity and foolishness compared to Your everlasting glory. O my Truth, my Mercy, my God, O Blessed Trinity, to You alone be praise and honor, power and glory, throughout all the endless ages of ages.

The Forty-First Chapter

Contempt for All Earthly Honor

The Voice of Christ

MY CHILD, do not take it to heart if you see others honored and advanced, while you yourself are despised and humbled. Lift up your heart to Me in heaven and the contempt of men on earth will not grieve you.

The Disciple

Lord, we are blinded and quickly misled by vanity. If I examine myself rightly, no injury has ever been done me by any creature; hence I have nothing for which to make just complaint to You. But I have sinned often and gravely against You; therefore is every creature in arms against me. Confusion and contempt should in justice come upon me, but to You due praise, honor, and glory. And unless I prepare myself to be willingly despised and forsaken by every creature, to be considered absolutely nothing, I cannot have interior peace and strength, nor can I be enlightened spiritually or completely united with You.

The Forty-Second Chapter

Peace is Not to Be Placed in Men

The Voice of Christ

MY CHILD, if you place your peace in any creature because of your own feeling or for the sake of his company, you will be unsettled and entangled. But if you have recourse to the ever-living and abiding Truth, you will not grieve if a friend should die or forsake you. Your love for your friend should be grounded in Me, and for My sake you should love whoever seems to be good and is very dear to you in this life. Without Me friendship has no strength and cannot endure. Love which I do not bind is neither true nor pure.

You ought, therefore, to be so dead to such human affections as to wish as far as lies within you to be without the fellowship of men. Man draws nearer to God in proportion as he withdraws farther from all earthly comfort. And he ascends higher to God as he descends lower into himself and grows more vile in his own eyes. He who attributes any good to himself hinders God's grace from coming into his heart, for the grace of the Holy Spirit seeks always the humble heart.

If you knew how to annihilate yourself completely and empty yourself of all created love, then I should overflow in you with great grace. When you look to creatures, the sight of the Creator is taken from you. Learn, therefore, to conquer yourself in all things for the sake of your Maker. Then will you be able to attain to divine knowledge. But anything, no matter how small, that is loved and regarded inordinately keeps you back from the highest good and corrupts the soul.

The Forty-Third Chapter

Beware Vain and Worldly Knowledge

The Voice of Christ

MY CHILD, do not let the fine-sounding and subtle words of men deceive you. For the kingdom of heaven consists not in talk but in virtue. Attend, rather, to My words which enkindle the heart and enlighten the mind, which excite contrition and abound in manifold consolations. Never read them for the purpose of appearing more learned or more wise. Apply yourself to mortifying your vices, for this will benefit you more than your understanding of many difficult questions.

Though you shall have read and learned many things, it will always be necessary for you to return to this one principle: I am He who teaches man knowledge, and to the little ones I give a clearer understanding than can be taught by man. He to whom I speak will soon be wise and his soul will profit. But woe to those who inquire of men about many curious things, and care very little about the way they serve Me.

The time will come when Christ, the Teacher of teachers, the Lord of angels, will appear to hear the lessons of all—that is, to examine the conscience of everyone. Then He will search Jerusalem with lamps and the hidden things of darkness will be brought to light and the arguings of men's tongues be silenced.

I am He Who in one moment so enlightens the humble mind that it comprehends more of eternal truth than could be learned by ten years in the schools. I teach without noise of words or clash of opinions, without ambition for honor or confusion of argument.

I am He Who teaches man to despise earthly possessions and to loathe present things, to ask after the eternal, to hunger for heaven, to fly honors

and to bear with scandals, to place all hope in Me, to desire nothing apart from Me, and to love Me ardently above all things. For a certain man by loving Me intimately learned divine truths and spoke wonders. He profited more by leaving all things than by studying subtle questions.

To some I speak of common things, to others of special matters. To some I appear with sweetness in signs and figures, and to others I appear in great light and reveal mysteries. The voice of books is but a single voice, yet it does not teach all men alike, because I within them am the Teacher and the Truth, the Examiner of hearts, the Understander of thoughts, the Promoter of acts, distributing to each as I see fit.

The Forty-Fourth Chapter

Do Not Be Concerned About Outward Things

The Voice of Christ

MY CHILD, there are many matters of which it is well for you to be ignorant, and to consider yourself as one who is dead upon the earth and to whom the whole world is crucified. There are many things, too, which it is well to pass by with a deaf ear, thinking, instead, of what is more to your peace. It is more profitable to turn away from things which displease you and to leave to every man his own opinion than to take part in quarrelsome talk. If you stand well with God and look to His judgment, you will more easily bear being worsted.

The Disciple

To what have we come, Lord? Behold, we bewail a temporal loss. We labor and fret for a small gain, while loss of the soul is forgotten and scarcely ever returns to mind. That which is of little or no value claims our attention, whereas that which is of highest necessity is neglected—all because man gives himself wholly to outward things. And unless he withdraws himself quickly, he willingly lies immersed in externals.

The Forty-Fifth Chapter

All Men Are Not to Be Believed, for It Is Easy to Err in Speech

The Disciple

GRANT me help in my needs, O Lord, for the aid of man is useless. How often have I failed to find faithfulness in places where I thought I possessed it! And how many times I have found it where I least expected it! Vain, therefore, is hope in men, but the salvation of the just is in You, O God. Blessed be Your name, O Lord my God, in everything that befalls us.

We are weak and unstable, quickly deceived and changed. Who is the man that is able to guard himself with such caution and care as not sometimes to fall into deception or perplexity? He who confides in You, O Lord, and seeks You with a simple heart does not fall so easily. And if some trouble should come upon him, no matter how entangled in it he may be, he will be more quickly delivered and comforted by You. For You will not forsake him who trusts in You to the very end.

Rare is the friend who remains faithful through all his friend's distress. But You, Lord, and You alone, are entirely faithful in all things; other than You, there is none so faithful.

Oh, how wise is that holy soul who said: "My mind is firmly settled and founded in Christ." If that were true of me, human fear would not so easily cause me anxiety, nor would the darts of words disturb. But who can foresee all things and provide against all evils? And if things foreseen have often hurt, can those which are unlooked for do otherwise than wound us gravely? Why, indeed, have I not provided better for my wretched self? Why, too, have I so easily kept faith in others? We are but men, however,

nothing more than weak men, although we are thought by many to be, and are called, angels.

In whom shall I put my faith, Lord? In whom but You? You are the truth which does not deceive and cannot be deceived. Every man, on the other hand, is a liar, weak, unstable, and likely to err, especially in words, so that one ought not to be too quick to believe even that which seems, on the face of it, to sound true. How wise was Your warning to beware of men; that a man's enemies are those of his own household; that we should not believe if anyone says: "Behold he is here, or behold he is there."

I have been taught to my own cost, and I hope it has given me greater caution, not greater folly. "Beware," they say, "beware and keep to yourself what I tell you!" Then while I keep silent, believing that the matter is secret, he who asks me to be silent cannot remain silent himself, but immediately betrays both me and himself, and goes his way. From tales of this kind and from such careless men protect me, O Lord, lest I fall into their hands and into their ways. Put in my mouth words that are true and steadfast and keep far from me the crafty tongue, because what I am not willing to suffer I ought by all means to shun.

Oh, how good and how peaceful it is to be silent about others, not to believe without discrimination all that is said, not easily to report it further, to reveal oneself to few, always to seek You as the discernor of hearts, and not to be blown away by every wind of words, but to wish that all things, within and beyond us, be done according to the pleasure of Thy will.

How conducive it is for the keeping of heavenly grace to fly the gaze of men, not to seek abroad things which seem to cause admiration, but to follow with utmost diligence those which give fervor and amendment of life! How many have been harmed by having their virtue known and praised too hastily! And how truly profitable it has been when grace remained hidden during this frail life, which is all temptation and warfare!

The Forty-Sixth Chapter

Trust in God Against Slander

The Voice of Christ

MY CHILD, stand firm and trust in Me. For what are words but words? They fly through the air but hurt not a stone. If you are guilty, consider how you would gladly amend. If you are not conscious of any fault, think that you wish to bear this for the sake of God. It is little enough for you occasionally to endure words, since you are not yet strong enough to bear hard blows.

And why do such small matters pierce you to the heart, unless because you are still carnal and pay more heed to men than you ought? You do not wish to be reproved for your faults and you seek shelter in excuses because you are afraid of being despised. But look into yourself more thoroughly and you will learn that the world is still alive in you, in a vain desire to please men. For when you shrink from being abased and confounded for your failings, it is plain indeed that you are not truly humble or truly dead to the world, and that the world is not crucified in you.

Listen to My word, and you will not value ten thousand words of men. Behold, if every malicious thing that could possibly be invented were uttered against you, what harm could it do if you ignored it all and gave it no more thought than you would a blade of grass? Could it so much as pluck one hair from your head?

He who does not keep his heart within him, and who does not have God before his eyes is easily moved by a word of disparagement. He who trusts in Me, on the other hand, and who has no desire to stand by his own judgment, will be free from the fear of men. For I am the judge and discerners of all secrets. I know how all things happen. I know who causes

injury and who suffers it. From Me that word proceeded, and with My permission it happened, that out of many hearts thoughts may be revealed. I shall judge the guilty and the innocent; but I have wished beforehand to try them both by secret judgment.

The testimony of man is often deceiving, but My judgment is true—it will stand and not be overthrown. It is hidden from many and made known to but a few. Yet it is never mistaken and cannot be mistaken even though it does not seem right in the eyes of the unwise.

To Me, therefore, you ought to come in every decision, not depending on your own judgment. For the just man will not be disturbed, no matter what may befall him from God. Even if an unjust charge be made against him he will not be much troubled. Neither will he exult vainly if through others he is justly acquitted. He considers that it is I Who search the hearts and inmost thoughts of men, that I do not judge according to the face of things or human appearances. For what the judgment of men considers praiseworthy is often worthy of blame in My sight.

The Disciple

O Lord God, just Judge, strong and patient, You Who know the weakness and depravity of men, be my strength and all my confidence, for my own conscience is not sufficient for me. You know what I do not know, and, therefore, I ought to humble myself whenever I am accused and bear it meekly. Forgive me, then, in Your mercy for my every failure in this regard, and give me once more the grace of greater endurance. Better to me is Your abundant mercy in obtaining pardon than the justice which I imagine in defending the secrets of my conscience. And though I am not conscious to myself of any fault, yet I cannot thereby justify myself, because without Your mercy no man living will be justified in Your sight.

The Forty-Seventh Chapter

Every Trial Must Be Borne for the Sake of Eternal Life

The Voice of Christ

MY CHILD, do not let the labors which you have taken up for My sake break you, and do not let troubles, from whatever source, cast you down; but in everything let My promise strengthen and console you. I am able to reward you beyond all means and measure.

You will not labor here long, nor will you always be oppressed by sorrows. Wait a little while and you will see a speedy end of evils. The hour will come when all labor and trouble shall be no more. All that passes away with time is trivial.

What you do, do well. Work faithfully in My vineyard. I will be your reward. Write, read, sing, mourn, keep silence, pray, and bear hardships like a man. Eternal life is worth all these and greater battles. Peace will come on a day which is known to the Lord, and then there shall be no day or night as at present but perpetual light, infinite brightness, lasting peace, and safe repose. Then you will not say: “Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” nor will you cry: “Woe is me, because my sojourn is prolonged.” For then death will be banished, and there will be health unfailing. There will be no anxiety then, but blessed joy and sweet, noble companionship.

If you could see the everlasting crowns of the saints in heaven, and the great glory wherein they now rejoice—they who were once considered contemptible in this world and, as it were, unworthy of life itself—you would certainly humble yourself at once to the very earth, and seek to be subject to all rather than to command even one. Nor would you desire the

pleasant days of this life, but rather be glad to suffer for God, considering it your greatest gain to be counted as nothing among men.

Oh, if these things appealed to you and penetrated deeply into your heart, how could you dare to complain even once? Ought not all trials be borne for the sake of everlasting life? In truth, the loss or gain of God's kingdom is no small matter.

Lift up your countenance to heaven, then. Behold Me, and with Me all My saints. They had great trials in this life, but now they rejoice. They are consoled. Now they are safe and at rest. And they shall abide with Me for all eternity in the kingdom of My Father.

The Forty-Eighth Chapter

The Day of Eternity and the Distresses of This Life

The Disciple

O MOST happy mansion of the city above! O most bright day of eternity, which night does not darken, but which the highest truth ever enlightens! O day, ever joyful and ever secure, which never changes its state to the opposite! Oh, that this day shine forth, that all these temporal things come to an end! It envelops the saints all resplendent with heavenly brightness, but it appears far off as through a glass to us wanderers on the earth. The citizens of heaven know how joyful that day is, but the exiled sons of Eve mourn that this one is bitter and tedious.

The days of this life are short and evil, full of grief and distress. Here man is defiled by many sins, ensnared in many passions, enslaved by many fears, and burdened with many cares. He is distracted by many curiosities and entangled in many vanities, surrounded by many errors and worn by many labors, oppressed by temptations, weakened by pleasures, and tortured by want.

Oh, when will these evils end? When shall I be freed from the miserable slavery of vice? When, Lord, shall I think of You alone? When shall I fully rejoice in You? When shall I be without hindrance, in true liberty, free from every grievance of mind and body? When will there be solid peace, undisturbed and secure, inward peace and outward peace, peace secured on every side? O good Jesus, when shall I stand to gaze upon You? When shall I contemplate the glory of Your kingdom? When will You be all in all to me? Oh, when shall I be with You in that kingdom of Yours, which You have prepared for Your beloved from all eternity?

I am left poor and exiled in a hostile land, where every day sees wars and very great misfortunes. Console my banishment, assuage my sorrow. My whole desire is for You. Whatever solace this world offers is a burden to me. I desire to enjoy You intimately, but I cannot attain to it. I wish to cling fast to heavenly things, but temporal affairs and unmortified passions bear me down. I wish in mind to be above all things, but I am forced by the flesh to be unwillingly subject to them. Thus, I fight with myself, unhappy that I am, and am become a burden to myself, while my spirit seeks to rise upward and my flesh to sink downward. Oh, what inward suffering I undergo when I consider heavenly things; when I pray, a multitude of carnal thoughts rush upon me!

O my God, do not remove Yourself far from me, and depart not in anger from Your servant. Dart forth Your lightning and disperse them; send forth Your arrows and let the phantoms of the enemy be put to flight. Draw my senses toward You and make me forget all worldly things. Grant me the grace to cast away quickly all vicious imaginings and to scorn them. Aid me, O heavenly Truth, that no vanity may move me. Come, heavenly Sweetness, and let all impurity fly from before Your face.

Pardon me also, and deal mercifully with me, as often as I think of anything besides You in prayer. For I confess truly that I am accustomed to be very much distracted. Very often I am not where bodily I stand or sit; rather, I am where my thoughts carry me. Where my thoughts are, there am I; and frequently my thoughts are where my love is. That which naturally delights, or is by habit pleasing, comes to me quickly. Hence You Who are Truth itself, have plainly said: "For where your treasure is, there is your heart also." If I love heaven, I think willingly of heavenly things. If I love the world, I rejoice at the happiness of the world and grieve at its troubles. If I love the flesh, I often imagine things that are carnal. If I love the spirit, I delight in thinking of spiritual matters. For whatever I love, I am willing to speak and hear about.

Blessed is the man who for Your sake, O Lord, dismisses all creatures, does violence to nature, crucifies the desires of the flesh in fervor of spirit, so that with serene conscience he can offer You a pure prayer and, having excluded all earthly things inwardly and outwardly, becomes worthy to enter into the heavenly choirs.

The Forty-Ninth Chapter

The Desire of Eternal Life; the Great Rewards Promised to Those Who Struggle

The Voice of Christ

MY CHILD, when you feel the desire for everlasting happiness poured out upon you from above, and when you long to depart out of the tabernacle of the body that you may contemplate My glory without threat of change, open wide your heart and receive this holy inspiration with all eagerness. Give deepest thanks to the heavenly Goodness which deals with you so understandingly, visits you so mercifully, stirs you so fervently, and sustains you so powerfully lest under your own weight you sink down to earthly things. For you obtain this not by your own thought or effort, but simply by the condescension of heavenly grace and divine regard. And the purpose of it is that you may advance in virtue and in greater humility, that you may prepare yourself for future trials, that you may strive to cling to Me with all the affection of your heart, and may serve Me with a fervent will.

My child, often, when the fire is burning the flame does not ascend without smoke. Likewise, the desires of some burn toward heavenly things, and yet they are not free from temptations of carnal affection. Therefore, it is not altogether for the pure honor of God that they act when they petition Him so earnestly. Such, too, is often your desire which you profess to be so strong. For that which is alloyed with self-interest is not pure and perfect.

Ask, therefore, not for what is pleasing and convenient to yourself, but for what is acceptable to Me and is for My honor, because if you judge rightly, you ought to prefer and follow My will, not your own desire or whatever things you wish.

I know your longings and I have heard your frequent sighs. Already you wish to be in the liberty of the glory of the sons of God. Already you desire the delights of the eternal home, the heavenly land that is full of joy. But that hour is not yet come. There remains yet another hour, a time of war, of labor, and of trial. You long to be filled with the highest good, but you cannot attain it now. I am that sovereign Good. Await Me, until the kingdom of God shall come.

You must still be tried on earth, and exercised in many things. Consolation will sometimes be given you, but the complete fullness of it is not granted. Take courage, therefore, and be strong both to do and to suffer what is contrary to nature.

You must put on the new man. You must be changed into another man. You must often do the things you do not wish to do and forego those you do wish. What pleases others will succeed; what pleases you will not. The words of others will be heard; what you say will be accounted as nothing. Others will ask and receive; you will ask and not receive. Others will gain great fame among men; about you nothing will be said. To others the doing of this or that will be entrusted; you will be judged useless. At all this nature will sometimes be sad, and it will be a great thing if you bear this sadness in silence. For in these and many similar ways the faithful servant of the Lord is wont to be tried, to see how far he can deny himself and break himself in all things.

There is scarcely anything in which you so need to die to self as in seeing and suffering things that are against your will, especially when things that are commanded seem inconvenient or useless. Then, because you are under authority, and dare not resist the higher power, it seems hard to submit to the will of another and give up your own opinion entirely.

But consider, my child, the fruit of these labors, how soon they will end and how greatly they will be rewarded, and you will not be saddened by them, but your patience will receive the strongest consolation. For instead of the little will that you now readily give up, you shall always have your will in heaven. There, indeed, you shall find all that you could desire. There you shall have possession of every good without fear of losing it. There shall your will be forever one with Mine. It shall desire nothing outside of Me and nothing for itself. There no one shall oppose you, no one shall complain of you, no one hinder you, and nothing stand in your way. All that

you desire will be present there, replenishing your affection and satisfying it to the full. There I shall render you glory for the reproach you have suffered here; for your sorrow I shall give you a garment of praise, and for the lowest place a seat of power forever. There the fruit of glory will appear, the labor of penance rejoice, and humble subjection be gloriously crowned.

Bow humbly, therefore, under the will of all, and do not heed who said this or commanded that. But let it be your special care when something is commanded, or even hinted at, whether by a superior or an inferior or an equal, that you take it in good part and try honestly to perform it. Let one person seek one thing and another something else. Let one glory in this, another in that, and both be praised a thousand times over. But as for you, rejoice neither in one or the other, but only in contempt of yourself and in My pleasure and honor. Let this be your wish: That whether in life or in death God may be glorified in you.

The Fiftieth Chapter

How a Desolate Person Ought to Commit Himself Into the Hands of God

The Disciple

LORD God, Holy Father, may You be blessed now and in eternity. For as You will, so is it done; and what You do is good. Let Your servant rejoice in You—not in himself or in any other, for You alone are true joy. You are my hope and my crown. You, O Lord, are my joy and my honor.

What does Your servant possess that he has not received from You, and that without any merit of his own? Yours are all the things which You have given, all the things which You have made.

I am poor and in labors since my youth, and my soul is sorrowful sometimes even to the point of tears. At times, also, my spirit is troubled because of impending sufferings. I long for the joy of peace. Earnestly I beg for the peace of Your children who are fed by You in the light of consolation. If You give peace, if You infuse holy joy, the soul of Your servant shall be filled with holy song and be devout in praising You. But if You withdraw Yourself, as You so very often do, he will not be able to follow the way of Your commandments, but will rather be obliged to strike his breast and bend the knee, because his today is different from yesterday and the day before when Your light shone upon his head and he was protected in the shadow of Your wings from the temptations rushing upon him.

Just Father, ever to be praised, the hour is come for Your servant to be tried. Beloved Father, it is right that in this hour Your servant should suffer something for You. O Father, forever to be honored, the hour which You

knew from all eternity is at hand, when for a short time Your servant should be outwardly oppressed, but inwardly should ever live with You.

Let him be a little slighted, let him be humbled, let him fail in the sight of men, let him be afflicted with sufferings and pains, so that he may rise again with You in the dawn of the new light and be glorified in heaven.

Holy Father, You have so appointed and wished it. What has happened is what You commanded. For this is a favor to Your friend, to suffer and be troubled in the world for Your love, no matter how often and by whom You permit it to happen to him.

Nothing happens in the world without Your design and providence, and without cause. It is well for me, O Lord, that You have humbled me, that I may learn the justice of Your judgments and cast away all presumption and haughtiness of heart. It is profitable for me that shame has covered my face that I may look to You rather than to men for consolation. Hereby I have learned also to fear Your inscrutable judgment falling alike upon the just and unjust yet not without equity and justice.

Thanks to You that You have not spared me evils but have bruised me with bitter blows, inflicting sorrows, sending distress without and within. Under heaven there is none to console me except You, my Lord God, the heavenly Physician of souls, Who wound and heal, Who cast down to hell and raise up again. Your discipline is upon me and Your very rod shall instruct me.

Behold, beloved Father, I am in Your hands. I bow myself under Your correcting chastisement. Strike my back and my neck, that I may bend my crookedness to Your will. Make of me a pious and humble follower, as in Your goodness You are wont to do, that I may walk according to Your every nod. Myself and all that is mine I commit to You to be corrected, for it is better to be punished here than hereafter.

You know all things without exception, and nothing in man's conscience is hidden from You. Coming events You know before they happen, and there is no need for anyone to teach or admonish You of what is being done on earth. You know what will promote my progress, and how much tribulation will serve to cleanse away the rust of vice. Deal with me according to Your good pleasure and do not despise my sinful life, which is known to none so well or so clearly as to You alone.

Grant me, O Lord, the grace to know what should be known, to praise what is most pleasing to You, to esteem that which appears most precious to You, and to abhor what is unclean in Your sight.

Do not allow me to judge according to the light of my bodily eyes, nor to give sentence according to the hearing of ignorant men's ears. But let me distinguish with true judgment between things visible and spiritual, and always seek above all things Your good pleasure. The senses of men often err in their judgments, and the lovers of this world also err in loving only visible things. How is a man the better for being thought greater by men? The deceiver deceives the deceitful, the vain man deceives the vain, the blind deceives the blind, the weak deceives the weak as often as he extols them, and in truth his foolish praise shames them the more. For, as the humble St. Francis says, whatever anyone is in Your sight, that he is and nothing more.

The Fifty-First Chapter

When We Cannot Attain to the Highest, We Must Practice the Humble Works

The Voice of Christ

MY CHILD, you cannot always continue in the more fervent desire of virtue, or remain in the higher stage of contemplation, but because of humanity's sin you must sometimes descend to lower things and bear the burden of this corruptible life, albeit unwillingly and wearily. As long as you wear a mortal body you will suffer weariness and heaviness of heart. You ought, therefore, to bewail in the flesh the burden of the flesh which keeps you from giving yourself unceasingly to spiritual exercises and divine contemplation.

In such condition, it is well for you to apply yourself to humble, outward works and to refresh yourself in good deeds, to await with unshaken confidence My heavenly visitation, patiently to bear your exile and dryness of mind until you are again visited by Me and freed of all anxieties. For I will cause you to forget your labors and to enjoy inward quiet. I will spread before you the open fields of the Scriptures, so that with an open heart you may begin to advance in the way of My commandments. And you will say: the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the future glory which shall be revealed to us.

The Fifty-Second Chapter

A Man Ought Not to Consider Himself Worthy of Consolation, But Rather Deserving of Chastisement

The Disciple

LORD, I am not worthy of Your consolation or of any spiritual visitation. Therefore, You treat me justly when You leave me poor and desolate. For though I could shed a sea of tears, yet I should not be worthy of Your consolation. Hence, I deserve only to be scourged and punished because I have offended You often and grievously, and have sinned greatly in many things. In all justice, therefore, I am not worthy of any consolation.

But You, O gracious and merciful God, Who do not will that Your works should perish, deign to console Your servant beyond all his merit and above human measure, to show the riches of Your goodness toward the vessels of mercy. For Your consolations are not like the words of men.

What have I done, Lord, that You should confer on me any heavenly comfort? I remember that I have done nothing good, but that I have always been prone to sin and slow to amend. That is true. I cannot deny it. If I said otherwise You would stand against me, and there would be no one to defend me. What have I deserved for my sins except hell and everlasting fire?

In truth, I confess that I am deserving of all scorn and contempt. Neither is it fitting that I should be remembered among Your devoted servants. And although it is hard for me to hear this, yet for truth's sake I will allege my sins against myself, so that I may more easily deserve to beg Your mercy. What shall I say, guilty as I am and full of all confusion? My tongue can say nothing but this alone: "I have sinned, O Lord, I have sinned; have mercy

on me and pardon me. Suffer me a little that I may pour out my grief, before I go to that dark land that is covered with the shadow of death.”

What do you especially demand of a guilty and wretched sinner, except that he be contrite and humble himself for his sins? In true sorrow and humility of heart hope of forgiveness is born, the troubled conscience is reconciled, grace is found, man is preserved from the wrath to come, and God and the penitent meet with a holy kiss.

To You, O Lord, humble sorrow for sins is an acceptable sacrifice, a sacrifice far sweeter than the perfume of incense. This is also the pleasing ointment which You would have poured upon Your sacred feet, for a contrite and humble heart You have never despised. Here is a place of refuge from the force of the enemy’s anger. Here is amended and washed away whatever defilement has been contracted elsewhere.

The Fifty-Third Chapter

God's Grace Is Not Given to the Earthly Minded

The Voice of Christ

MY CHILD, my grace is precious. It does not allow itself to be mixed with external things or with earthly consolations. Cast away all obstacles to grace, therefore, if you wish to receive its infusion.

Seek to retire within yourself. Love to dwell alone with yourself. Seek no man's conversation, but rather pour forth devout prayer to God that you may keep your mind contrite and your heart pure.

Consider the whole world as nothing. Prefer attendance upon God to all outward occupation, for you cannot attend upon Me and at the same time take delight in external things. You must remove yourself from acquaintances and from dear friends, and keep your mind free of all temporal consolation. Thus the blessed Apostle St. Peter begs the faithful of Christ to keep themselves as strangers and pilgrims in the world.

What great confidence at the hour of death shall be his who is not attached to this world by any affection. But the sickly soul does not know what it is to have a heart thus separated from all things, nor does the natural man know the liberty of the spiritual man. Yet, if he truly wishes to be spiritual, he must renounce both strangers and friends, and must beware of no one more than himself.

If you completely conquer yourself, you will more easily subdue all other things. The perfect victory is to triumph over self. For he who holds himself in such subjection that sensuality obeys reason and reason obeys Me in all matters, is truly his own conqueror and master of the world.

Now, if you wish to climb to this high position you must begin like a man, and lay the ax to the root, in order to tear out and destroy any hidden unruly love of self or of earthly goods. From this vice of too much self-love comes almost every other vice that must be uprooted. And when this evil is vanquished, and brought under control, great peace and quiet will follow at once.

But because few labor to die entirely to self, or tend completely away from self, therefore they remain entangled in self, and cannot be lifted in spirit above themselves. But he who desires to walk freely with Me must mortify all his low and inordinate affections, and must not cling with selfish love or desire to any creature.

The Fifty-Fourth Chapter

The Different Motions of Nature and Grace

The Voice of Christ

MY CHILD, pay careful attention to the movements of nature and of grace, for they move in very contrary and subtle ways, and can scarcely be distinguished by anyone except a man who is spiritual and inwardly enlightened. All men, indeed, desire what is good, and strive for what is good in their words and deeds. For this reason the appearance of good deceives many.

Nature is crafty and attracts many, ensnaring and deceiving them while ever seeking itself. But grace walks in simplicity, turns away from all appearance of evil, offers no deceits, and does all purely for God in whom she rests as her last end.

Nature is not willing to die, or to be kept down, or to be overcome. Nor will it subdue itself or be made subject. Grace, on the contrary, strives for mortification of self. She resists sensuality, seeks to be in subjection, longs to be conquered, has no wish to use her own liberty, loves to be held under discipline, and does not desire to rule over anyone, but wishes rather to live, to stand, and to be always under God for Whose sake she is willing to bow humbly to every human creature.

Nature works for its own interest and looks to the profit it can reap from another. Grace does not consider what is useful and advantageous to herself, but rather what is profitable to many. Nature likes to receive honor and reverence, but grace faithfully attributes all honor and glory to God. Nature fears shame and contempt, but grace is happy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus. Nature loves ease and physical rest. Grace, however, cannot bear to be idle and embraces labor willingly. Nature seeks to possess what

is rare and beautiful, abhorring things that are cheap and coarse. Grace, on the contrary, delights in simple, humble things, not despising those that are rough, nor refusing to be clothed in old garments.

Nature has regard for temporal wealth and rejoices in earthly gains. It is sad over a loss and irritated by a slight, injurious word. But grace looks to eternal things and does not cling to those which are temporal, being neither disturbed at loss nor angered by hard words, because she has placed her treasure and joy in heaven where nothing is lost.

Nature is covetous, and receives more willingly than it gives. It loves to have its own private possessions. Grace, however, is kind and openhearted. Grace shuns private interest, is contented with little, and judges it more blessed to give than to receive.

Nature is inclined toward creatures, toward its own flesh, toward vanities, and toward running about. But grace draws near to God and to virtue, renounces creatures, hates the desires of the flesh, restrains her wanderings and blushes at being seen in public.

Nature likes to have some external comfort in which it can take sensual delight, but grace seeks consolation only in God, to find her delight in the highest Good, above all visible things.

Nature does everything for its own gain and interest. It can do nothing without pay and hopes for its good deeds to receive their equal or better, or else praise and favor. It is very desirous of having its deeds and gifts highly regarded. Grace, however, seeks nothing temporal, nor does she ask any recompense but God alone. Of temporal necessities she asks no more than will serve to obtain eternity.

Nature rejoices in many friends and kinsfolk, glories in noble position and birth, fawns on the powerful, flatters the rich, and applauds those who are like itself. But grace loves even her enemies and is not puffed up at having many friends. She does not think highly of either position or birth unless there is also virtue there. She favors the poor in preference to the rich. She sympathizes with the innocent rather than with the powerful. She rejoices with the true man rather than with the deceitful, and is always exhorting the good to strive for better gifts, to become like the Son of God by practicing the virtues.

Nature is quick to complain of need and trouble; grace is stanch in suffering want.

Nature turns all things back to self. It fights and argues for self. Grace brings all things back to God in Whom they have their source. To herself she ascribes no good, nor is she arrogant or presumptuous. She is not contentious. She does not prefer her own opinion to the opinion of others, but in every matter of sense and thought submits herself to eternal wisdom and the divine judgment.

Nature has a relish for knowing secrets and hearing news. It wishes to appear abroad and to have many sense experiences. It wishes to be known and to do things for which it will be praised and admired. But grace does not care to hear news or curious matters, because all this arises from the old corruption of man, since there is nothing new, nothing lasting on earth. Grace teaches, therefore, restraint of the senses, avoidance of vain self-satisfaction and show, the humble hiding of deeds worthy of praise and admiration, and the seeking in every thing and in every knowledge the fruit of usefulness, the praise and honor of God. She will not have herself or hers exalted, but desires that God Who bestows all simply out of love should be blessed in His gifts.

This grace is a supernatural light, a certain special gift of God, the proper mark of the elect and the pledge of everlasting salvation. It raises man up from earthly things to love the things of heaven. It makes a spiritual man of a carnal one.

The more, then, nature is held in check and conquered, the more grace is given. Every day the interior man is reformed by new visitations according to the image of God.

The Fifty-Fifth Chapter

The Corruption of Nature and the Efficacy of Divine Grace

The Disciple

O LORD, my God, Who created me to Your own image and likeness, grant me this grace which You have shown to be so great and necessary for salvation, that I may overcome my very evil nature that is drawing me to sin and perdition. For I feel in my flesh the law of sin contradicting the law of my mind and leading me captive to serve sensuality in many things. I cannot resist the passions thereof unless Your most holy grace warmly infused into my heart assist me.

There is need of Your grace, and of great grace, in order to overcome a nature prone to evil from youth. For through the first man, Adam, nature is fallen and weakened by sin, and the punishment of that stain has fallen upon all mankind. Thus nature itself, which You created good and right, is considered a symbol of vice and the weakness of corrupted nature, because when left to itself it tends toward evil and to baser things. The little strength remaining in it is like a spark hidden in ashes. That strength is natural reason which, surrounded by thick darkness, still has the power of judging good and evil, of seeing the difference between true and false, though it is not able to fulfill all that it approves and does not enjoy the full light of truth or soundness of affection.

Hence it is, my God, that according to the inward man I delight in Your law, knowing that Your command is good, just, and holy, and that it proves the necessity of shunning all evil and sin. But in the flesh I keep the law of sin, obeying sensuality rather than reason. Hence, also, it is that the will to good is present in me, but how to accomplish it I know not. Hence, too, I

often propose many good things, but because the grace to help my weakness is lacking, I recoil and give up at the slightest resistance. Thus it is that I know the way of perfection and see clearly enough how I ought to act, but because I am pressed down by the weight of my own corruption I do not rise to more perfect things.

How extremely necessary to me, O Lord, Your grace is to begin any good deed, to carry it on and bring it to completion! For without grace I can do nothing, but with its strength I can do all things in You. O Grace truly heavenly, without which our merits are nothing and no gifts of nature are to be esteemed!

Before You, O Lord, no arts or riches, no beauty or strength, no wit or intelligence avail without grace. For the gifts of nature are common to good and bad alike, but the peculiar gift of Your elect is grace or love, and those who are signed with it are held worthy of everlasting life. So excellent is this grace that without it no gift of prophecy or of miracles, no meditation be it ever so exalted, can be considered anything. Not even faith or hope or other virtues are acceptable to You without charity and grace.

O most blessed grace, which makes the poor in spirit rich in virtues, which renders him who is rich in many good things humble of heart, come, descend upon me, fill me quickly with your consolation lest my soul faint with weariness and dryness of mind.

Let me find grace in Your sight, I beg, Lord, for Your grace is enough for me, even though I obtain none of the things which nature desires. If I am tempted and afflicted with many tribulations, I will fear no evils while Your grace is with me. This is my strength. This will give me counsel and help. This is more powerful than all my enemies and wiser than all the wise. This is the mistress of truth, the teacher of discipline, the light of the heart, the consoler in anguish, the banisher of sorrow, the expeller of fear, the nourisher of devotion, the producer of tears. What am I without grace, but dead wood, a useless branch, fit only to be cast away?

Let Your grace, therefore, go before me and follow me, O Lord, and make me always intent upon good works, through Jesus Christ, Your Son.

The Fifty-Sixth Chapter

We Ought to Deny Ourselves and Imitate Christ Through Bearing the Cross

The Voice of Christ

MY CHILD, the more you depart from yourself, the more you will be able to enter into Me. As the giving up of exterior things brings interior peace, so the forsaking of self unites you to God. I will have you learn perfect surrender to My will, without contradiction or complaint.

Follow Me. I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Without the Way, there is no going. Without the Truth, there is no knowing. Without the Life, there is no living. I am the Way which you must follow, the Truth which you must believe, the Life for which you must hope. I am the inviolable Way, the infallible Truth, the unending Life. I am the Way that is straight, the supreme Truth, the Life that is true, the blessed, the uncreated Life. If you abide in My Way you shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall make you free, and you shall attain life everlasting.

If you wish to enter into life, keep My commandments. If you will know the truth, believe in Me. If you will be perfect, sell all. If you will be My disciple, deny yourself. If you will possess the blessed life, despise this present life. If you will be exalted in heaven, humble yourself on earth. If you wish to reign with Me, carry the Cross with Me. For only the servants of the Cross find the life of blessedness and of true light.

The Disciple

Lord Jesus, because Your way is narrow and despised by the world, grant that I may despise the world and imitate You. For the servant is not greater

than his Lord, nor The Disciple above the Master. Let Your servant be trained in Your life, for there is my salvation and true holiness. Whatever else I read or hear does not fully refresh or delight me.

The Voice of Christ

My child, now that you know these things and have read them all, happy will you be if you do them. He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is that loves Me. And I will love him and will show Myself to him, and will bring it about that he will sit down with Me in My Father's Kingdom.

The Disciple

Lord Jesus, as You have said, so be it, and what You have promised, let it be my lot to win. I have received the cross, from Your hand I have received it. I will carry it, carry it even unto death as You have laid it upon me. Truly, the life of a good religious man is a cross, but it leads to paradise. We have begun—we may not go back, nor may we leave off.

Take courage, brethren, let us go forward together and Jesus will be with us. For Jesus' sake we have taken this cross. For Jesus' sake let us persevere with it. He will be our help as He is also our leader and guide. Behold, our King goes before us and will fight for us. Let us follow like men. Let no man fear any terrors. Let us be prepared to meet death valiantly in battle. Let us not suffer our glory to be blemished by fleeing from the Cross.

The Fifty-Seventh Chapter

A Man Should Not Be Too Downcast When He Falls Into Defects

The Voice of Christ

MY CHILD, patience and humility in adversity are more pleasing to Me than much consolation and devotion when things are going well.

Why are you saddened by some little thing said against you? Even if it had been more you ought not to have been affected. But now let it pass. It is not the first, nor is it anything new, and if you live long it will not be the last.

You are manly enough so long as you meet no opposition. You give good advice to others, and you know how to strengthen them with words, but when unexpected tribulation comes to your door, you fail both in counsel and in strength. Consider your great weakness, then, which you experience so often in small matters. Yet when these and like trials happen, they happen for your good.

Put it out of your heart as best you know how, and if it has touched you, still do not let it cast you down or confuse you for long. Bear it patiently at least, if you cannot bear it cheerfully. Even though you bear it unwillingly, and are indignant at it, restrain yourself and let no ill-ordered words pass your lips at which the weak might be scandalized. The storm that is now aroused will soon be quieted and your inward grief will be sweetened by returning grace. “I yet live,” says the Lord, “ready to help you and to console you more and more, if you trust in Me and call devoutly upon Me.”

Remain tranquil and prepare to bear still greater trials. All is not lost even though you be troubled oftener or tempted more grievously. You are a man, not God. You are flesh, not an angel. How can you possibly expect to

remain always in the same state of virtue when the angels in heaven and the first man in paradise failed to do so? I am He Who rescues the afflicted and brings to My divinity those who know their own weakness.

The Disciple

Blessed be Your words, O Lord, sweeter to my mouth than honey and the honeycomb. What would I do in such great trials and anxieties, if You did not strengthen me with Your holy words? If I may but attain to the haven of salvation, what does it matter what or how much I suffer? Grant me a good end. Grant me a happy passage out of this world. Remember me, my God, and lead me by the right way into Your kingdom.

The Fifty-Eighth Chapter

High Matters and the Hidden Judgments of God Are Not to Be Scrutinized

The Voice of Christ

MY CHILD, beware of discussing high matters and God's hidden judgments—why this person is so forsaken and why that one is favored with so great a grace, or why one man is so afflicted and another so highly exalted. Such things are beyond all human understanding and no reason or disputation can fathom the judgments of God.

When the enemy puts such suggestions in your mind, therefore, or when some curious persons raise questions about them, answer with the prophet: “Thou art just, O Lord, and righteous are Thy judgments”; and this: “The judgments of the Lord are true and wholly righteous.” My judgments are to be feared, not discussed, because they are incomprehensible to the understanding of men.

In like manner, do not inquire or dispute about the merits of the saints, as to which is more holy, or which shall be greater in the kingdom of heaven. Such things often breed strife and useless contentions. They nourish pride and vainglory, whence arise envy and quarrels, when one proudly tries to exalt one saint and the other another. A desire to know and pry into such matters brings forth no fruit. On the contrary, it displeases the saints, because I am the God, not of dissension, but of peace—of that peace which consists in true humility rather than in self-exaltation.

Some are drawn by the ardor of their love with greater affection to these saints or to those, but this affection is human and not divine. I am He who made all the saints. I gave them grace: I brought them to glory. I know the merits of each of them. I came before them in the blessings of My

sweetness. I knew My beloved ones before the ages. I chose them out of the world—they did not choose Me. I called them by grace, I drew them on by mercy. I led them safely through various temptations. I poured into them glorious consolations. I gave them perseverance and I crowned their patience. I know the first and the last. I embrace them all with love inestimable. I am to be praised in all My saints. I am to be blessed above all things, and honored in each of those whom I have exalted and predestined so gloriously without any previous merits of their own.

He who despises one of the least of mine, therefore, does no honor to the greatest, for both the small and the great I made. And he who disparages one of the saints disparages Me also and all others in the kingdom of heaven. They are all one through the bond of charity. They have the same thought and the same will, and they mutually love one another; but, what is a much greater thing, they love Me more than themselves or their own merits. Rapt above themselves, and drawn beyond love of self, they are entirely absorbed in love of Me, in Whom they rest. There is nothing that can draw them away or depress them, for they who are filled with eternal truth burn with the fire of unquenchable love.

Therefore, let carnal and sensual men, who know only how to love their own selfish joys, forbear to dispute about the state of God's saints. Such men take away and add according to their own inclinations and not as it pleases the Eternal Truth. In many this is sheer ignorance, especially in those who are but little enlightened and can rarely love anyone with a purely spiritual love. They are still strongly drawn by natural affection and human friendship to one person or another, and on their behavior in such things here below are based their imaginings of heavenly things. But there is an incomparable distance between the things which the imperfect imagine and those which enlightened men contemplate through revelation from above.

Be careful, then, My child, of treating matters beyond your knowledge out of curiosity. Let it rather be your business and aim to be found, even though the least, in the kingdom of God. For though one were to know who is more holy than another, or who is greater in the kingdom of heaven, of what value would this knowledge be to him unless out of it he should humble himself before Me and should rise up in greater praise of My name?

The man who thinks of the greatness of his own sins and the littleness of his virtues, and of the distance between himself and the perfection of the saints, acts much more acceptably to God than the one who argues about who is greater or who is less. It is better to invoke the saints with devout prayers and tears, and with a humble mind to beg their glorious aid, than to search with vain inquisitiveness into their secrets.

The saints are well and perfectly contented if men know how to content themselves and cease their useless discussions. They do not glory in their own merits, for they attribute no good to themselves but all to Me, because out of My infinite charity I gave all to them. They are filled with such love of God and with such overflowing joy, that no glory is wanting to them and they can lack no happiness. All the saints are so much higher in glory as they are more humble in themselves; nearer to Me, and more beloved by Me. Therefore, you find it written that they cast their crowns before God, and fell down upon their faces before the Lamb, and adored Him Who lives forever.

Many ask who is the greater in the kingdom of heaven when they do not know whether they themselves shall be worthy of being numbered among its least. It is a great thing to be even the least in heaven where all are great because all shall be called, and shall be, the children of God. The least shall be as a thousand, and the sinner of a hundred years shall die. For when The Disciples asked who should be greater in the kingdom of heaven they heard this response: "Unless you be converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, he is the greater in the kingdom of heaven."

Woe to those, therefore, who disdain to humble themselves willingly with the little children, for the low gate of the heavenly kingdom will not permit them to enter. Woe also to the rich who have their consolations here, for when the poor enter into God's kingdom, they will stand outside lamenting. Rejoice, you humble, and exult, you poor, for the kingdom of God is yours, if only you walk in the truth.

The Fifty-Ninth Chapter

All Hope and Trust Are to Be Fixed In God Alone

The Disciple

WHAT, Lord, is the trust which I have in this life, or what is my greatest comfort among all the things that appear under heaven? Is it not You, O Lord, my God, Whose mercies are without number? Where have I ever fared well but for You? Or how could things go badly when You were present? I had rather be poor for Your sake than rich without You. I prefer rather to wander on the earth with You than to possess heaven without You. Where You are there is heaven, and where You are not are death and hell. You are my desire and therefore I must cry after You and sigh and pray. In none can I fully trust to help me in my necessities, but in You alone, my God. You are my hope. You are my confidence. You are my consoler, most faithful in every need.

All seek their own interests. You, however, place my salvation and my profit first, and turn all things to my good. Even though exposing me to various temptations and hardships, You Who are accustomed to prove Your loved ones in a thousand ways, order all this for my good. You ought not to be loved or praised less in this trial than if You had filled me with heavenly consolations.

In You, therefore, O Lord God, I place all my hope and my refuge. On You I cast all my troubles and anguish, because whatever I have outside of You I find to be weak and unstable. It will not serve me to have many friends, nor will powerful helpers be able to assist me, nor prudent advisers to give useful answers, nor the books of learned men to console, nor any precious substance to win my freedom, nor any place, secret and beautiful

though it be, to shelter me, if You Yourself do not assist, comfort, console, instruct, and guard me. For all things which seem to be for our peace and happiness are nothing when You are absent, and truly confer no happiness.

You, indeed, are the fountain of all good, the height of life, the depth of all that can be spoken. To trust in You above all things is the strongest comfort of Your servants.

My God, the Father of mercies, to You I look, in You I trust. Bless and sanctify my soul with heavenly benediction, so that it may become Your holy dwelling and the seat of Your eternal glory. And in this temple of Your dignity let nothing be found that might offend Your majesty. In Your great goodness, and in the multitude of Your mercies, look upon me and listen to the prayer of Your poor servant exiled from You in the region of the shadow of death. Protect and preserve the soul of Your poor servant among the many dangers of this corruptible life, and direct him by Your accompanying grace, through the ways of peace, to the land of everlasting light.

BOOK FOUR

An Invitation To Holy Communion

The Voice of Christ

COME to Me, all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you. The bread which I will give is My Flesh, for the life of the world. Take you and eat: this is My Body, which shall be delivered for you. Do this for the commemoration of Me. He that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, abideth in Me, and I in him. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.”

The First Chapter

The Great Reverence With Which We Should Receive Christ

The Disciple

THESE are all Your words, O Christ, eternal Truth, though they were not all spoken at one time nor written together in one place. And because they are Yours and true, I must accept them all with faith and gratitude. They are Yours and You have spoken them; they are mine also because You have spoken them for my salvation. Gladly I accept them from Your lips that they may be the more deeply impressed in my heart.

Words of such tenderness, so full of sweetness and love, encourage me; but my sins frighten me and an unclean conscience thunders at me when approaching such great mysteries as these. The sweetness of Your words invites me, but the multitude of my vices oppresses me.

You command me to approach You confidently if I wish to have part with You, and to receive the food of immortality if I desire to obtain life and glory everlasting.

“Come to me,” You say, “all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you.”

Oh, how sweet and kind to the ear of the sinner is the word by which You, my Lord God, invite the poor and needy to receive Your most holy Body! Who am I, Lord, that I should presume to approach You? Behold, the heaven of heavens cannot contain You, and yet You say: “Come, all of you, to Me.”

What means this most gracious honor and this friendly invitation? How shall I dare to come, I who am conscious of no good on which to presume? How shall I lead You into my house, I who have so often offended in Your

most kindly sight? Angels and archangels revere You, the holy and the just fear You, and You say: “Come to Me: all of you!” If You, Lord, had not said it, who would have believed it to be true? And if You had not commanded, who would dare approach?

Behold, Noah, a just man, worked a hundred years building the ark that he and a few others might be saved; how, then, can I prepare myself in one hour to receive with reverence the Maker of the world?

Moses, Your great servant and special friend, made an ark of incorruptible wood which he covered with purest gold wherein to place the tables of Your law; shall I, a creature of corruption, dare so easily to receive You, the Maker of law and the Giver of life?

Solomon, the wisest of the kings of Israel, spent seven years building a magnificent temple in praise of Your name, and celebrated its dedication with a feast of eight days. He offered a thousand victims in Your honor and solemnly bore the Ark of the Covenant with trumpeting and jubilation to the place prepared for it; and I, unhappy and poorest of men, how shall I lead You into my house, I who scarcely can spend a half-hour devoutly—would that I could spend even that as I ought!

O my God, how hard these men tried to please You! Alas, how little is all that I do! How short the time I spend in preparing for Communion! I am seldom wholly recollected, and very seldom, indeed, entirely free from distraction. Yet surely in the presence of Your life-giving Godhead no unbecoming thought should arise and no creature possess my heart, for I am about to receive as my guest, not an angel, but the very Lord of angels.

Very great, too, is the difference between the Ark of the Covenant with its treasures and Your most pure Body with its ineffable virtues, between these sacrifices of the law which were but figures of things to come and the true offering of Your Body which was the fulfillment of all ancient sacrifices.

Why, then, do I not long more ardently for Your adorable presence? Why do I not prepare myself with greater care to receive Your sacred gifts, since those holy patriarchs and prophets of old, as well as kings and princes with all their people, have shown such affectionate devotion for the worship of God?

The most devout King David danced before the ark of God with all his strength as he recalled the benefits once bestowed upon his fathers. He made musical instruments of many kinds. He composed psalms and ordered

them sung with joy. He himself often played upon the harp when moved by the grace of the Holy Ghost. He taught the people of Israel to praise God with all their hearts and to raise their voices every day to bless and glorify Him. If such great devotion flourished in those days and such ceremony in praise of God before the Ark of the Covenant, what great devotion ought not I and all Christian people now show in the presence of this Sacrament; what reverence in receiving the most excellent Body of Christ!

Many people travel far to honor the relics of the saints, marveling at their wonderful deeds and at the building of magnificent shrines. They gaze upon and kiss the sacred relics encased in silk and gold; and behold, You are here present before me on the altar, my God, Saint of saints, Creator of men, and Lord of angels!

Often in looking at such things, men are moved by curiosity, by the novelty of the unseen, and they bear away little fruit for the amendment of their lives, especially when they go from place to place lightly and without true contrition. But here in the Sacrament of the altar You are wholly present, my God, the man Christ Jesus, whence is obtained the full realization of eternal salvation, as often as You are worthily and devoutly received. To this, indeed, we are not drawn by levity, or curiosity, or sensuality, but by firm faith, devout hope, and sincere love.

O God, hidden Creator of the world, how wonderfully You deal with us! How sweetly and graciously You dispose of things with Your elect to whom You offer Yourself to be received in this Sacrament! This, indeed, surpasses all understanding. This in a special manner attracts the hearts of the devout and inflames their love. Your truly faithful servants, who give their whole life to amendment, often receive in Holy Communion the great grace of devotion and love of virtue.

Oh, the wonderful and hidden grace of this Sacrament which only the faithful of Christ understand, which unbelievers and slaves of sin cannot experience! In it spiritual grace is conferred, lost virtue restored, and the beauty, marred by sin, repaired. At times, indeed, its grace is so great that, from the fullness of the devotion, not only the mind but also the frail body feels filled with greater strength.

Nevertheless, our neglect and coldness is much to be deplored and pitied, when we are not moved to receive with greater fervor Christ in Whom is the hope and merit of all who will be saved. He is our sanctification and

redemption. He is our consolation in this life and the eternal joy of the blessed in heaven. This being true, it is lamentable that many pay so little heed to the salutary Mystery which fills the heavens with joy and maintains the whole universe in being.

Oh, the blindness and the hardness of the heart of man that does not show more regard for so wonderful a gift, but rather falls into carelessness from its daily use! If this most holy Sacrament were celebrated in only one place and consecrated by only one priest in the whole world, with what great desire, do you think, would men be attracted to that place, to that priest of God, in order to witness the celebration of the divine Mysteries! But now there are many priests and Mass is offered in many places, that God's grace and love for men may appear the more clearly as the Sacred Communion is spread more widely through the world.

Thanks be to You, Jesus, everlasting Good Shepherd, Who have seen fit to feed us poor exiled people with Your precious Body and Blood, and to invite us with words from Your own lips to partake of these sacred Mysteries: "Come to Me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you."

The Second Chapter

God's Great Goodness and Love is Shown to Man in This Sacrament

The Disciple

TRUSTING in Your goodness and great mercy, O Lord, I come as one sick to the Healer, as one hungry and thirsty to the Fountain of life, as one in need to the King of heaven, a servant to his Lord, a creature to his Creator, a soul in desolation to my gentle Comforter.

But whence is this to me, that You should come to me? Who am I that You should offer Yourself to me? How dares the sinner to appear in Your presence, and You, how do You condescend to come to the sinner? You know Your servant, and You know that he has nothing good in him that You should grant him this.

I confess, therefore, my unworthiness. I acknowledge Your goodness. I praise Your mercy, and give thanks for Your immense love. For it is because of Yourself that You do it, not for any merit of mine; so that Your goodness may be better known to me, that greater love may be aroused and more perfect humility born in me. Since, then, this pleases You and You have so willed it, Your graciousness pleases me also. Oh, that my sinfulness may not stand in the way!

O most sweet and merciful Jesus, what great reverence, thanks, and never-ending praise are due to You for our taking of Your sacred body, whose dignity no man can express!

But on what shall I think in this Communion, this approach to my Lord, Whom I can never reverence as I ought, and yet Whom I desire devoutly to receive? What thought better, more helpful to me than to humble myself entirely in Your presence and exalt Your infinite goodness above myself?

I praise You, my God, and extol You forever! I despise myself and cast myself before You in the depths of my unworthiness. Behold, You are the Holy of holies, and I the scum of sinners! Behold, You bow down to me who am not worthy to look up to You! Behold, You come to me! You will to be with me! You invite me to Your banquet! You desire to give me heavenly food, the Bread of Angels to eat, none other than Yourself, the living Bread Who are come down from heaven and give life to the world.

Behold, whence love proceeds! What condescension shines forth! What great thanks and praise are due You for these gifts! Oh, how salutary and profitable was Your design in this institution! How sweet and pleasant the banquet when You gave Yourself as food!

How admirable is Your work, O Lord! How great Your power! How infallible Your truth! For You spoke and all things were made, and this, which You commanded, was done. It is a wonderful thing, worthy of faith, overpowering human understanding, that You, O Lord, my God, true God and man, are contained whole and entire under the appearance of a little bread and wine, and without being consumed are eaten by him who receives You!

You, the Lord of the universe, Who have need of nothing, have willed to dwell in us by means of Your Sacrament. Keep my heart and body clean, so that with a joyous and spotless conscience I may be able often to celebrate Your Mysteries and to receive for my eternal salvation what You have ordained and instituted for Your special honor and as an everlasting memorial.

Rejoice, my soul, and give thanks to God for having left you so noble a gift and so special a consolation in this valley of tears. As often as you renew this Mystery and receive the Body of Christ, so often do you enact the work of redemption and become a sharer in all the merits of Christ, for the love of Christ never grows less and the wealth of His mercy is never exhausted.

Therefore, you should prepare yourself for it by constantly renewing your heart and pondering deeply the great mystery of salvation. As often as you celebrate or hear Mass, it should seem as great, as new, as sweet to you as if on that very day Christ became man in the womb of the Virgin, or, hanging on the Cross, suffered and died for the salvation of man.

The Third Chapter

It Is Profitable to Receive Communion Often

The Disciple

BEHOLD, I come to You, Lord, that I may prosper by Your gift and be delighted at Your holy banquet which You, O God, in Your sweetness have prepared for Your poor. Behold, all that I can or ought to desire is in You. You are my salvation and my redemption, my hope and strength, my honor and glory.

Gladden, then, this day the soul of Your servant because I have raised my heart to You, O Lord Jesus. I long to receive You now, devoutly and reverently. I desire to bring You into my house that, with Zacheus, I may merit Your blessing and be numbered among the children of Abraham.

My soul longs for Your Body; my heart desires to be united with You. Give me Yourself—it is enough; for without You there is no consolation. Without You I cannot exist, without Your visitation I cannot live. I must often come to You, therefore, and receive the strength of my salvation lest, deprived of this heavenly food, I grow weak on the way. Once, most merciful Jesus, while preaching to the people and healing their many ills, You said: “I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way.” Deal with me likewise, You Who have left Yourself in this Sacrament for the consolation of the faithful. You are sweet refreshment to the soul, and he who eats You worthily will be a sharer in, and an heir to, eternal glory.

It is indeed necessary for me, who fall and sin so often, who so quickly become lax and weak, to renew, cleanse, and inflame myself through frequent prayer, confession, and the holy reception of Your Body, lest perhaps by abstaining too long, I fall away from my holy purpose. For from the days of his youth the senses of man are prone to evil, and unless divine

aid strengthens him, he quickly falls deeper. But Holy Communion removes him from evil and confirms him in good.

If I am so often careless and lax when I celebrate or communicate, what would happen if I did not receive this remedy and seek so great a help? Although I am neither fit nor properly disposed to celebrate every day, yet I will do my best at proper times to receive the divine Mysteries and share in this great grace. This, indeed, is the one chief consolation of the faithful soul when separated from You by mortality, that often mindful of her God, she receives her Beloved with devout recollection.

Oh, wonderful condescension of Your affection toward us, that You, the Lord God, Creator and Giver of life to all, should see fit to come to a poor soul and to appease her hunger with all Your divinity and humanity! O happy mind and blessed soul which deserves to receive You, her Lord God, and in receiving You, is filled with spiritual joy! How great a Master she entertains, what a beloved guest she receives, how sweet a companion she welcomes, how true a friend she gains, how beautiful and noble is the spouse she embraces, beloved and desired above all things that can be loved and desired! Let heaven and earth and all their treasures stand silent before Your face, most sweetly Beloved, for whatever glory and beauty they have is of Your condescending bounty, and they cannot approach the beauty of Your name, Whose wisdom is untold.

The Fourth Chapter

Many Blessings Are Given Those Who Receive Communion Worthily

The Disciple

O LORD my God, favor Your servant with the blessings of Your sweetness that I may merit to approach Your magnificent Sacrament worthily and devoutly. Lift up my heart to You and take away from me this heavy indolence. Visit me with Your saving grace that I may in spirit taste Your sweetness which lies hidden in this Sacrament like water in the depths of a spring. Enlighten my eyes to behold this great Mystery, and give me strength to believe in it with firm faith.

For it is Your work, not the power of man, Your sacred institution, not his invention. No man is able of himself to comprehend and understand these things which surpass even the keen vision of angels. How, then, shall I, an unworthy sinner who am but dust and ashes, be able to fathom and understand so great a mystery?

O Lord, I come to You at Your command in simplicity of heart, in good, firm faith, with hope and reverence, and I truly believe that You are present here in this Sacrament, God and man. It is Your will that I receive You and unite myself to You in love. Wherefore, I beg Your mercy and ask that special grace be given me, that I may be wholly dissolved in You and filled with Your love, no longer to concern myself with exterior consolations. For this, the highest and most worthy Sacrament, is the health of soul and body, the cure of every spiritual weakness. In it my defects are remedied, my passions restrained, and temptations overcome or allayed. In it greater grace is infused, growing virtue is nourished, faith confirmed, hope strengthened, and charity fanned into flame.

You, my God, the protector of my soul, the strength of human weakness, and the giver of every interior consolation, have given and still do often give in this Sacrament great gifts to Your loved ones who communicate devoutly. Moreover, You give them many consolations amid their numerous troubles and lift them from the depths of dejection to the hope of Your protection. With new graces You cheer and lighten them within, so that they who are full of anxiety and without affection before Communion may find themselves changed for the better after partaking of this heavenly food and drink.

Likewise, You so deal with Your elect that they may truly acknowledge and plainly experience how weak they are in themselves and what goodness and grace they obtain from You. For though in themselves they are cold, obdurate, and wanting in devotion, through You they become fervent, cheerful, and devout.

Who, indeed, can humbly approach the fountain of sweetness and not carry away a little of it? Or who, standing before a blazing fire does not feel some of its heat? You are a fountain always filled with superabundance! You are a fire, ever burning, that never fails!

Therefore, while I may not exhaust the fullness of the fountain or drink to satiety, yet will I put my lips to the mouth of this heavenly stream that from it I may receive at least some small drop to refresh my thirst and not wither away. And if I cannot as yet be all heavenly or as full of fire as the cherubim and seraphim, yet I will try to become more devout and prepare my heart so that I may gather some small spark of divine fire from the humble reception of this life-giving Sacrament.

Whatever is wanting in me, good Jesus, Savior most holy, do You in Your kindness and grace supply for me, You Who have been pleased to call all unto You, saying: "Come to Me all you that labor and are burdened and I will refresh you."

I, indeed, labor in the sweat of my brow. I am torn with sorrow of heart. I am laden with sin, troubled with temptations, enmeshed and oppressed by many evil passions, and there is none to help me, none to deliver and save me but You, my Lord God and Savior, to Whom I entrust myself and all I have, that You may protect me and lead me to eternal life. For the honor and glory of Your name receive me, You Who have prepared Your Body and Blood as food and drink for me. Grant, O Lord, my God and Savior, that by

approaching Your Mysteries frequently, the zeal of my devotion may increase.

The Fifth Chapter

The Dignity of the Sacrament and of the Priesthood

The Voice of Christ

HAD you the purity of an angel and the sanctity of St. John the Baptist, you would not be worthy to receive or administer this Sacrament. It is not because of any human meriting that a man consecrates and administers the Sacrament of Christ, and receives the Bread of Angels for his food. Great is the Mystery and great the dignity of priests to whom is given that which has not been granted the angels. For priests alone, rightly ordained in the Church, have power to celebrate Mass and consecrate the Body of Christ.

The priest, indeed, is the minister of God, using the word of God according to His command and appointment. God, moreover, is there—the chief Author and invisible Worker to Whom all is subject as He wills, to Whom all are obedient as He commands.

In this most excellent Sacrament, therefore, you ought to believe in God rather than in your own senses or in any visible sign, and thus, with fear and reverence draw near to such a work as this. Look to yourself and see whose ministry has been given you through the imposition of the bishop's hands.

Behold, you have been made a priest, consecrated to celebrate Mass! See to it now that you offer sacrifice to God faithfully and devoutly at proper times, and that you conduct yourself blamelessly. You have not made your burden lighter. Instead, you are now bound by stricter discipline and held to more perfect sanctity.

A priest ought to be adorned with all virtues and show the example of a good life to others. His way lies not among the vulgar and common habits of men but with the angels in heaven and the perfect men on earth. A priest

clad in the sacred vestments acts in Christ's place, that he may pray to God both for himself and for all people in a suppliant and humble manner. He has before and behind him the sign of the Lord's cross that he may always remember the Passion of Christ. It is before him, on the chasuble, that he may look closely upon the footsteps of Christ and try to follow them fervently. It is behind him—he is signed with it—that he may gladly suffer for God any adversities inflicted by others.

He wears the cross before him that he may mourn his own sins, behind him, that in pity he may mourn the sins of others, and know that he is appointed to stand between God and the sinner, never to become weary of prayer and the holy offering until it is granted him to obtain grace and mercy.

When the priest celebrates Mass, he honors God, gladdens the angels, strengthens the Church, helps the living, brings rest to the departed, and wins for himself a share in all good things.

The Sixth Chapter

An Inquiry on the Proper Thing to Do Before Communion

The Disciple

WHEN I consider Your dignity, O Lord, and my own meanness, I become very much frightened and confused. For if I do not receive, I fly from Life, and if I intrude unworthily, I incur Your displeasure. What, then, shall I do, my God, my Helper and Adviser in necessity? Teach me the right way. Place before me some short exercise suitable for Holy Communion, for it is good to know in what manner I ought to make my heart ready devoutly and fervently for You, to receive Your Sacrament for the good of my soul, or even to celebrate so great and divine a sacrifice.

The Seventh Chapter

The Examination of Conscience and the Resolution to Amend

The Voice of Christ

ABOVE all, God's priest should approach the celebration and reception of this Sacrament with the deepest humility of heart and suppliant reverence, with complete faith and the pious intention of giving honor to God.

Carefully examine your conscience, then. Cleanse and purify it to the best of your power by true contrition and humble confession, that you may have no burden, know of no remorse, and thus be free to come near. Let the memory of all your sins grieve you, and especially lament and bewail your daily transgressions. Then if time permits, confess to God in the secret depths of your heart all the miseries your passions have caused.

Lament and grieve because you are still so worldly, so carnal, so passionate and unmortified, so full of roving lust, so careless in guarding the external senses, so often occupied in many vain fancies, so inclined to exterior things and so heedless of what lies within, so prone to laughter and dissipation and so indisposed to sorrow and tears, so inclined to ease and the pleasures of the flesh and so cool to austerity and zeal, so curious to hear what is new and to see the beautiful and so slow to embrace humiliation and dejection, so covetous of abundance, so niggardly in giving and so tenacious in keeping, so inconsiderate in speech, so reluctant in silence, so undisciplined in character, so disordered in action, so greedy at meals, so deaf to the Word of God, so prompt to rest and so slow to labor, so awake to empty conversation, so sleepy in keeping sacred vigils and so eager to end them, so wandering in your attention, so careless in saying the office, so lukewarm in celebrating, so heartless in receiving, so quickly

distracted, so seldom fully recollected, so quickly moved to anger, so apt to take offense at others, so prone to judge, so severe in condemning, so happy in prosperity and so weak in adversity, so often making good resolutions and carrying so few of them into action.

When you have confessed and deplored these and other faults with sorrow and great displeasure because of your weakness, be firmly determined to amend your life day by day and to advance in goodness. Then, with complete resignation and with your entire will offer yourself upon the altar of your heart as an everlasting sacrifice to the honor of My name, by entrusting with faith both body and soul to My care, that thus you may be considered worthy to draw near and offer sacrifice to God and profitably receive the Sacrament of My Body. For there is no more worthy offering, no greater satisfaction for washing away sin than to offer yourself purely and entirely to God with the offering of the Body of Christ in Mass and Communion.

If a man does what he can and is truly penitent, however often he comes to Me for grace and pardon, “As I live, saith the Lord God, I desire not the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live”; I will no longer remember his sins, but all will be forgiven him.

The Eighth Chapter

The Offering of Christ on the Cross; Our Offering

The Voice of Christ

AS I offered Myself willingly to God the Father for your sins with hands outstretched and body naked on the cross, so that nothing remained in Me that had not become a complete sacrifice to appease the divine wrath, so ought you to be willing to offer yourself to Me day by day in the Mass as a pure and holy oblation, together with all your faculties and affections, with as much inward devotion as you can.

What more do I ask than that you give yourself entirely to Me? I care not for anything else you may give Me, for I seek not your gift but you. Just as it would not be enough for you to have everything if you did not have Me, so whatever you give cannot please Me if you do not give yourself.

Offer yourself to Me, therefore, and give yourself entirely for God—your offering will be accepted. Behold, I offered Myself wholly to the Father for you, I even gave My whole Body and Blood for food that I might be all yours, and you Mine forever.

But if you rely upon self, and do not offer your free will to Mine, your offering will be incomplete and the union between us imperfect. Hence, if you desire to attain grace and freedom of heart, let the free offering of yourself into the hands of God precede your every action. This is why so few are inwardly free and enlightened—they know not how to renounce themselves entirely.

My word stands: “Everyone of you that doth not renounce all that he possesseth, cannot be My disciple.”

If, therefore, you wish to be My disciple, offer yourself to Me with all your heart.

The Ninth Chapter

We Should Offer Ourselves and All That We Have to God, Praying for All

The Disciple

ALL things in heaven and on earth, O Lord, are Yours. I long to give myself to You as a voluntary offering to remain forever Yours. With a sincere heart I offer myself this day to You, O Lord, to Your eternal service, to Your homage, and as a sacrifice of everlasting praise. Receive me with this holy offering of Your precious Body which also I make to You this day, in the presence of angels invisibly attending, for my salvation and that of all Your people.

O Lord, upon Your altar of expiation, I offer You all the sins and offenses I have committed in Your presence and in the presence of Your holy angels, from the day when I first could sin until this hour, that You may burn and consume them all in the fire of Your love, that You may wipe away their every stain, cleanse my conscience of every fault, and restore to me Your grace which I lost in sin by granting full pardon for all and receiving me mercifully with the kiss of peace.

What can I do for all my sins but humbly confess and lament them, and implore Your mercy without ceasing? In Your mercy, I implore You, hear me when I stand before You, my God. All my sins are most displeasing to me. I wish never to commit them again. I am sorry for them and will be sorry as long as I live. I am ready to do penance and make satisfaction to the utmost of my power.

Forgive me, O God, forgive me my sins for Your Holy Name. Save my soul which You have redeemed by Your most precious Blood. See, I place

myself at Your mercy. I commit myself to Your hands. Deal with me according to Your goodness, not according to my malicious and evil ways.

I offer to You also all the good I have, small and imperfect though it be, that You may make it more pure and more holy, that You may be pleased with it, render it acceptable to Yourself, and perfect it more and more, and finally that You may lead me, an indolent and worthless creature, to a good and happy end.

I offer You also all the holy desires of Your devoted servants, the needs of my parents, friends, brothers, sisters, and all who are dear to me; of all who for Your sake have been kind to me or to others; of all who have wished and asked my prayers and Masses for them and theirs, whether they yet live in the flesh or are now departed from this world, that they may all experience the help of Your grace, the strength of Your consolation, protection from dangers, deliverance from punishment to come, and that, free from all evils, they may gladly give abundant thanks to You.

I offer You also these prayers and the Sacrifice of Propitiation for those especially who have in any way injured, saddened, or slandered me, inflicted loss or pain upon me, and also for all those whom I have at any time saddened, disturbed, offended, and abused by word or deed, willfully or in ignorance. May it please You to forgive us all alike our sins and offenses against one another.

Take away from our hearts, O Lord, all suspicion, anger, wrath, contention, and whatever may injure charity and lessen brotherly love. Have mercy, O Lord, have mercy on those who ask Your mercy, give grace to those who need it, and make us such that we may be worthy to enjoy Your favor and gain eternal life.

The Tenth Chapter

Do Not Lightly Forego Holy Communion

The Voice of Christ

YOU must often return to the source of grace and divine mercy, to the fountain of goodness and perfect purity, if you wish to be free from passion and vice, if you desire to be made stronger and more watchful against all the temptations and deceits of the devil.

The enemy, knowing the great good and the healing power of Holy Communion, tries as much as he can by every manner and means to hinder and keep away the faithful and the devout. Indeed, there are some who suffer the worst assaults of Satan when disposing themselves to prepare for Holy Communion. As it is written in Job, this wicked spirit comes among the sons of God to trouble them by his wonted malice, to make them unduly fearful and perplexed, that thus he may lessen their devotion or attack their faith to such an extent that they perhaps either forego Communion altogether or receive with little fervor.

No attention, however, must be paid to his cunning wiles, no matter how base and horrible—all his suggestions must be cast back upon his head. The wretch is to be despised and scorned. Holy Communion must not be passed by because of any assaults from him or because of the commotion he may arouse.

Oftentimes, also, too great solicitude for devotion and anxiety about confession hinder a person. Do as wise men do. Cast off anxiety and scruple, for it impedes the grace of God and destroys devotion of the mind.

Do not remain away from Holy Communion because of a small trouble or vexation but go at once to confession and willingly forgive all others

their offenses. If you have offended anyone, humbly seek pardon and God will readily forgive you.

What good is it to delay confession for a long time or to put off Holy Communion? Cleanse yourself at once, spit out the poison quickly. Make haste to apply the remedy and you will find it better than if you had waited a long time. If you put it off today because of one thing, perhaps tomorrow a greater will occur to you, and thus you will stay away from Communion for a long time and become even more unfit.

Shake off this heaviness and sloth as quickly as you can, for there is no gain in much anxiety, in enduring long hours of trouble, and in depriving yourself of the divine Mysteries because of these daily disturbances. Yes, it is very hurtful to defer Holy Communion long, for it usually brings on a lazy spiritual sleep.

How sad that some dissolute and lax persons are willing to postpone confession and likewise wish to defer Holy Communion, lest they be forced to keep a stricter watch over themselves! Alas, how little love and devotion have they who so easily put off Holy Communion!

How happy and acceptable to God is he who so lives, and keeps his conscience so pure, as to be ready and well disposed to communicate, even every day if he were permitted, and if he could do so unnoticed.

If, now and then, a man abstains by the grace of humility or for a legitimate reason, his reverence is commendable, but if laziness takes hold of him, he must arouse himself and do everything in his power, for the Lord will quicken his desire because of the good intention to which He particularly looks. When he is indeed unable to come, he will always have the good will and pious intention to communicate and thus he will not lose the fruit of the Sacrament.

Any devout person may at any hour on any day receive Christ in spiritual communion profitably and without hindrance. Yet on certain days and times appointed he ought to receive with affectionate reverence the Body of his Redeemer in this Sacrament, seeking the praise and honor of God rather than his own consolation.

For as often as he devoutly calls to mind the mystery and passion of the Incarnate Christ, and is inflamed with love for Him, he communicates mystically and is invisibly refreshed.

He who prepares himself only when festivals approach or custom demands, will often find himself unprepared. Blessed is he who offers himself a sacrifice to the Lord as often as he celebrates or communicates.

Be neither too slow nor too fast in celebrating but follow the good custom common to those among whom you are. You ought not to cause others inconvenience or trouble, but observe the accepted rule as laid down by superiors, and look to the benefit of others rather than to your own devotion or inclination.

The Eleventh Chapter

The Body of Christ and Sacred Scripture Are Most Necessary to a Faithful Soul

The Disciple

O MOST sweet Lord Jesus, how great is the happiness of the devout soul that feasts upon You at Your banquet, where there is set before her to be eaten no other food but Yourself alone, her only Lover, most desired of all that her heart can desire!

To me it would be happiness, indeed, to shed tears in Your presence from the innermost depths of love, and like the pious Magdalen to wash Your feet with them. But where now is this devotion, this copious shedding of holy tears? Certainly in Your sight, before Your holy angels, my whole heart ought to be inflamed and weep for joy. For, hidden though You are beneath another form, I have You truly present in the Sacrament.

My eyes could not bear to behold You in Your own divine brightness, nor could the whole world stand in the splendor of the glory of Your majesty. In veiling Yourself in the Sacrament, therefore, You have regard for my weakness.

In truth, I possess and adore Him Whom the angels adore in heaven—I as yet by faith, they face to face unveiled. I must be content with the light of the true faith and walk in it until the day of eternal brightness dawns and the shadow of figures passes away. When, moreover, that which is perfect shall have come, the need of sacraments shall cease, for the blessed in heavenly glory need no healing sacrament. Rejoicing endlessly in the presence of God, beholding His glory face to face, transformed from their own brightness to the brightness of the ineffable Deity, they taste the Word of God made flesh, as He was in the beginning and will remain in eternity.

Though mindful of these wonderful things, every spiritual solace becomes wearisome to me because so long as I do not plainly see the Lord in His glory, I consider everything I hear and see on earth of little account.

You are my witness, O God, that nothing can comfort me, no creature give me rest but You, my God, Whom I desire to contemplate forever. But this is not possible while I remain in mortal life, and, therefore, I must be very patient and submit myself to You in every desire.

Even Your saints, O Lord, who now rejoice with You in the kingdom of heaven, awaited the coming of Your glory with faith and great patience while they lived. What they believed, I believe. What they hoped for, I hope for, and whither they arrived, I trust I shall come by Your grace. Meanwhile I will walk in faith, strengthened by the example of the saints. I shall have, besides, for comfort and for the guidance of my life, the holy Books, and above all these, Your most holy Body for my special haven and refuge.

I feel there are especially necessary for me in this life two things without which its miseries would be unbearable. Confined here in this prison of the body I confess I need these two, food and light. Therefore, You have given me in my weakness Your sacred Flesh to refresh my soul and body, and You have set Your word as the guiding light for my feet. Without them I could not live aright, for the word of God is the light of my soul and Your Sacrament is the Bread of Life.

These also may be called the two tables, one here, one there, in the treasure house of holy Church. One is the table of the holy altar, having the holy Bread that is the precious Body of Christ. The other is the table of divine law, containing holy doctrine that teaches all the true faith and firmly leads them within the veil, the Holy of holies.

Thanks to You, Lord Jesus, Light of eternal light, for the table of Your holy teaching which You have prepared for us by Your servants, the prophets and Apostles and other learned men.

Thanks to You, Creator and Redeemer of men, Who, to declare Your love to all the world, have prepared a great supper in which You have placed before us as food not the lamb, the type of Yourself, but Your own most precious Body and Blood, making all the faithful glad in Your sacred banquet, intoxicating them with the chalice of salvation in which are all the delights of paradise; and the holy angels feast with us but with more happiness and sweetness.

Oh, how great and honorable is the office of the priest, to whom is given the consecration of the Lord of majesty in sacred words, whose lips bless Him, whose hands hold Him, whose tongue receives Him, and whose ministry it is to bring Him to others!

Oh, how clean those hands should be, how pure the lips, how sanctified the body, how immaculate the heart of the priest to whom the Author of all purity so often comes. No word but what is holy, none but what is good and profitable ought to come from the lips of the priest who so often receives the Sacrament of Christ. Single and modest should be the eyes accustomed to looking upon the Body of Christ. Pure and lifted up to heaven the hands accustomed to handle the Creator of heaven and earth. To priests above all it is written in the law: "Be ye holy, for I, the Lord your God, am holy."

Let Your grace, almighty God, assist us, that we who have undertaken the office of the priesthood may serve You worthily and devoutly in all purity and with a good conscience. And if we cannot live as innocently as we ought, grant us at least to lament duly the wrongs we have committed and in the spirit of humility and the purpose of a good will to serve You more fervently in the future.

The Twelfth Chapter

The Communicant Should Prepare Himself for Christ with Great Care

The Voice of Christ

I AM the Lover of purity, the Giver of all holiness. I seek a pure heart and there is the place of My rest.

Prepare for Me a large room furnished and I with My disciples will keep the Pasch with you.

If you wish that I come to you and remain with you, purge out the old leaven and make clean the dwelling of your heart. Shut out the whole world with all the din of its vices. Sit as the sparrow lonely on the housetop, and think on your transgressions in bitterness of soul.

Everyone who loves prepares the best and most beautiful home for his beloved, because the love of the one receiving his lover is recognized thereby.

But understand that you cannot by any merit of your own make this preparation well enough, though you spend a year in doing it and think of nothing else. It is only by My goodness and grace that you are allowed to approach My table, as though a beggar were invited to dinner by a rich man and he had nothing to offer in return for the gift but to humble himself and give thanks.

Do what you can and do that carefully. Receive the Body of the Lord, your beloved God Who deigns to come to you, not out of habit or necessity, but with fear, with reverence, and with love.

I am He that called you. I ordered it done. I will supply what you lack. Come and receive Me.

When I grant the grace of devotion, give thanks to God, not because you are worthy but because I have had mercy upon you. If you have it not and feel rather dry instead, continue in prayer, sigh and knock, and do not give up until you receive some crumb of saving grace.

You have need of Me. I do not need you. You do not come to sanctify Me but I come to sanctify you and make you better. You come to be sanctified and united with Me, to receive new grace and to be aroused anew to amend. Do not neglect this grace, but prepare your heart with all care, and bring into it your Beloved.

Not only should you prepare devoutly before Communion, but you should also carefully keep yourself in devotion after receiving the Sacrament. The careful custody of yourself afterward is no less necessary than the devout preparation before, for a careful afterwatch is the best preparation for obtaining greater grace. If a person lets his mind wander to external comforts, he becomes quite indisposed.

Beware of much talking. Remain in seclusion and enjoy your God, for you have Him Whom all the world cannot take from you.

I am He to Whom you should give yourself entirely, that from now on you may live, not in yourself, but in Me, with all cares cast away.

The Thirteenth Chapter

With All Her Heart the Devout Soul Should Desire Union with Christ in the Sacrament

The Disciple

LET it be granted me to find You alone, O Christ, to open to You my whole heart, to enjoy You as my soul desires, to be disturbed by no one, to be moved and troubled by no creature, that You may speak to me and I to You alone, as a lover speaks to his loved one, and friend converses with friend.

I pray for this, I desire this, that I may be completely united to You and may withdraw my heart from all created things, learning to relish the celestial and the eternal through Holy Communion and the frequent celebration of Mass.

Ah Lord God, when shall I be completely united to You and absorbed by You, with self utterly forgotten? You in me and I in You? Grant that we may remain so together. You in truth are my Beloved, chosen from thousands, in Whom my soul is happy to dwell all the days of her life. You are in truth my pledge of peace, in Whom is the greatest peace and true rest, without Whom there is toil and sorrow and infinite misery.

You truly are the hidden God. Your counsel is not with the wicked, and Your conversation is rather with the humble and the simple.

O how kind is Your spirit, Lord, Who in order to show Your sweetness toward Your children, deign to feed them with the sweetest of bread, bread come down from heaven! Surely there is no other people so fortunate as to have their god near them, as You, our God, are present everywhere to the faithful, to whom You give Yourself to be eaten and enjoyed for their daily solace and the raising of their hearts to heaven.

Indeed, what other nation is so renowned as the Christian peoples? What creature under heaven is so favored as the devout soul to whom God comes, to feed her with His glorious Flesh? O unspeakable grace! O wonderful condescension! O love beyond measure, singularly bestowed upon man!

What return shall I make to the Lord for this love, this grace so boundless? There is nothing I can give more pleasing than to offer my heart completely to my God, uniting it closely with His. Then shall all my inner self be glad when my soul is perfectly united with God. Then will He say to me: "If you will be with Me, I will be with you." And I will answer Him: "Deign, O Lord, to remain with me. I will gladly be with You. This is my one desire, that my heart may be united with You."

The Fourteenth Chapter

The Ardent Longing of Devout Men for the Body of Christ

The Disciple

HOW great is the abundance of Your kindness, O Lord, which You have hidden from those who fear You!

When I think how some devout persons come to Your Sacrament with the greatest devotion and love, I am frequently ashamed and confused that I approach Your altar and the table of Holy Communion so coldly and indifferently; that I remain so dry and devoid of heartfelt affection; that I am not completely inflamed in Your presence, O my God, nor so strongly drawn and attracted as many devout persons who, in their great desire for Communion and intense heart love, could not restrain their tears but longed from the depths of their souls and bodies to embrace You, the Fountain of Life. These were able to appease and allay their hunger in no other way than by receiving Your Body with all joy and spiritual eagerness. The faith of these men was true and ardent—convincing proof of Your sacred presence. They whose hearts burn so ardently within them when Jesus lives with them truly know their Lord in the breaking of bread.

Such affection and devotion, such mighty love and zeal are often far beyond me. Be merciful to me, O sweet, good, kind Jesus, and grant me, Your poor suppliant, sometimes at least to feel in Holy Communion a little of the tenderness of Your love, that my faith may grow stronger, that my hope in Your goodness may increase, and that charity, once perfectly kindled within me by tasting heavenly manna, may never fail.

Your mercy can give me the grace I long for and can visit me most graciously with fervor of soul according to Your good pleasure. For

although I am not now inflamed with as great desire as those who are singularly devoted to You, yet by Your grace I long for this same great flame, praying and seeking a place among all such ardent lovers that I may be numbered among their holy company.

The Fifteenth Chapter

The Grace of Devotion is Acquired Through Humility and Self-Denial

The Voice of Christ

YOU must seek earnestly the grace of devotion, ask for it fervently, await it patiently and hopefully, receive it gratefully, guard it humbly, cooperate with it carefully and leave to God, when it comes, the length and manner of the heavenly visitation.

When you feel little or no inward devotion, you should especially humiliate yourself, but do not become too dejected or unreasonably sad. In one short moment God often gives what He has long denied. At times He grants at the end what He has denied from the beginning of prayer. If grace were always given at once, or were present at our beck and call, it would not be well taken by weak humankind. Therefore, with good hope and humble patience await the grace of devotion.

When it is not given, or for some unknown reason is taken away, blame yourself and your sins. Sometimes it is a small matter that hinders grace and hides it, if, indeed, that which prevents so great a good may be called little rather than great. But if you remove this hindrance, be it great or small, and if you conquer it perfectly, you shall have what you ask. As soon as you have given yourself to God with all your heart and seek neither this nor that for your own pleasure and purpose, but place yourself completely in His charge, you shall find yourself at peace, united with Him, because nothing will be so sweet, nothing will please you so much as the good pleasure of His will.

Anyone, therefore, who shall with simplicity of heart direct his intention to God and free himself from all inordinate love or dislike for any creature

will be most fit to receive grace and will be worthy of the gift of devotion. For where the Lord finds the vessel empty He pours down His blessing.

So also the more perfectly a man renounces things of this world, and the more completely he dies to himself through contempt of self, the more quickly this great grace comes to him, the more plentifully it enters in, and the higher it uplifts the free heart.

Then shall he see and abound, then shall his heart marvel and be enlarged within him, because the Hand of the Lord is with him and in the hollow of that Hand he has placed himself forever. Thus shall the man be blessed who seeks God with all his heart and has not regarded his soul in vain. Such a one, receiving the Holy Eucharist, merits the grace of divine union because he looks not on his own thoughts, nor to his own comfort, but above all devotion and consolation to the glory and honor of God.

The Sixteenth Chapter

We Should Show Our Needs to Christ and Ask His Grace

The Disciple

O MOST kind, most loving Lord, Whom I now desire to receive with devotion, You know the weakness and the necessity which I suffer, in what great evils and vices I am involved, how often I am depressed, tempted, defiled, and troubled.

To You I come for help, to You I pray for comfort and relief. I speak to Him Who knows all things, to Whom my whole inner life is manifest, and Who alone can perfectly comfort and help me.

You know what good things I am most in need of and how poor I am in virtue. Behold I stand before You, poor and naked, asking Your grace and imploring Your mercy.

Feed Your hungry beggar. Inflame my coldness with the fire of Your love. Enlighten my blindness with the brightness of Your presence. Turn all earthly things to bitterness for me, all grievance and adversity to patience, all lowly creation to contempt and oblivion. Raise my heart to You in heaven and suffer me not to wander on earth. From this moment to all eternity do You alone grow sweet to me, for You alone are my food and drink, my love and my joy, my sweetness and my total good.

Let Your presence wholly inflame me, consume and transform me into Yourself, that I may become one spirit with You by the grace of inward union and by the melting power of Your ardent love.

Suffer me not to go from You fasting and thirsty, but deal with me mercifully as You have so often and so wonderfully dealt with Your saints.

What wonder if I were completely inflamed by You to die to myself, since You are the fire ever burning and never dying, a love purifying the heart and enlightening the understanding.

The Seventeenth Chapter

The Burning Love and Strong Desire to Receive Christ

The Disciple

WITH greatest devotion and ardent love, with all affection and fervor of heart I wish to receive You, O Lord, as many saints and devout persons, most pleasing to You in their holiness of life and most fervent in devotion, desired You in Holy Communion.

O my God, everlasting love, my final good, my happiness unending, I long to receive You with as strong a desire and as worthy a reverence as any of the saints ever had or could have felt, and though I am not worthy to have all these sentiments of devotion, still I offer You the full affection of my heart as if I alone had all those most pleasing and ardent desires.

Yet, whatever a God-fearing mind can conceive and desire, I offer in its entirety to You with the greatest reverence and inward affection. I wish to keep nothing for self but to offer to You, willingly and most freely, myself and all that is mine.

O Lord God, my Creator and my Redeemer, I long to receive You this day with such reverence, praise, and honor, with such gratitude, worthiness and love, with such faith, hope, and purity as that with which Your most holy Mother, the glorious Virgin Mary, longed for and received You when she humbly and devoutly answered the angel who announced to her the mystery of the Incarnation: “Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word.”

Likewise as Your blessed precursor, the most excellent of saints, John the Baptist, gladdened by Your presence, exulted in the Holy Ghost while yet enclosed in the womb of his mother, and afterward seeing Jesus walking

among men, humbled himself and with devout love declared: “The friend of the bridegroom, who standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth with joy because of the bridegroom’s voice,” even so I long to be inflamed with great and holy desires and to give myself to You with all my heart.

Therefore I offer and present to You the gladness of all devout hearts, their ardent affection, their mental raptures, their supernatural illuminations and heavenly visions together with all the virtues and praises which have been or shall be celebrated by all creatures in heaven and on earth, for myself and all commended to my prayers, that You may be worthily praised and glorified forever.

Accept, O Lord my God, my promises and desires of giving You infinite praise and boundless benediction, which in the vastness of Your ineffable greatness are justly due You. This I render and desire to render every day and every moment of time, and in my loving prayers I invite and entreat all celestial spirits and all the faithful to join me in giving You praise and thanks.

Let all people, races, and tongues praise You and with the greatest joy and most ardent devotion magnify Your sweet and holy name. And let all who reverently and devoutly celebrate this most great Sacrament and receive it in the fullness of faith, find kindness and mercy in You and humbly pray for me, a sinner. And when they have received the longed-for devotion and blissful union, and, well consoled and wonderfully refreshed, have retired from Your holy, Your celestial table, may they deign to remember my poor soul.

The Eighteenth Chapter

Man Should Not Scrutinize This Sacrament in Curiosity, But Humbly Imitate Christ and Submit Reason to Holy Faith

The Voice of Christ

BEWARE of curious and vain examination of this most profound Sacrament, if you do not wish to be plunged into the depths of doubt. He who scrutinizes its majesty too closely will be overwhelmed by its glory.

God can do more than man can understand. A pious and humble search for truth He will allow, a search that is ever ready to learn and that seeks to walk in the reasonable doctrine of the fathers.

Blest is the simplicity that leaves the difficult way of dispute and goes forward on the level, firm path of God's commandments. Many have lost devotion because they wished to search into things beyond them.

Faith is required of you, and a sincere life, not a lofty intellect nor a delving into the mysteries of God. If you neither know nor understand things beneath you, how can you comprehend what is above you? Submit yourself to God and humble reason to faith, and the light of understanding will be given you so far as it is good and necessary for you. Some are gravely tempted concerning faith and the Sacrament but this disturbance is not laid to them but to the enemy.

Be not disturbed, dispute not in your mind, answer not the doubts sent by the devil, but believe the words of God, believe His saints and prophets and the evil enemy will flee from you. It is often very profitable for the servant of God to suffer such things. For Satan does not tempt unbelievers and

sinner whom he already holds securely, but in many ways he does tempt and trouble the faithful servant.

Go forward, then, with sincere and unflinching faith, and with humble reverence approach this Sacrament. Whatever you cannot understand commit to the security of the all-powerful God, Who does not deceive you. The man, however, who trusts in himself is deceived. God walks with sincere men, reveals Himself to humble men, enlightens the understanding of pure minds, and hides His grace from the curious and the proud.

Human reason is weak and can be deceived. True faith, however, cannot be deceived. All reason and natural science ought to come after faith, not go before it, nor oppose it. For in this most holy and supremely excellent Sacrament, faith and love take precedence and work in a hidden manner.

God, eternal, incomprehensible, and infinitely powerful, does great and inscrutable things in heaven and on earth, and there is no searching into His marvelous works. If all the works of God were such that human reason could easily grasp them, they would not be called wonderful or beyond the power of words to tell.

THE LITTLE GARDEN OF ROSES AND VALLEY OF LILIES

THOMAS A KEMPIS

E-BOOK ALSO AVAILABLE IN PAPERBACK.
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CONTENTS

THE LITTLE GARDEN OF ROSES AND VALLEY OF LILIES

PREFACE

THE LITTLE GARDEN OF ROSES

CHAP. I

On seeking the Company of the good, and flying that of the bad

CHAP. II

On flying the world, and the snares of the devil

CHAP. III

On true wisdom to be sought of God

CHAP. IV

On warring against our own vices

CHAP. V

“On the needful grace of devotion”

CHAP. VI

Of hearing and reading the Divine Word

CHAP. VII

On Divine consolation in tribulation

CHAP. VIII

Of the joy of a good conscience in the Holy Spirit

CHAP. IX

On the good conversation of an humble brother

CHAP. X

On the instability of the human heart

CHAP. XI

On Trust in God in time of trouble

CHAP. XII

On the virtue of prayer, and the profit of holy reading

CHAP. XIII

On the praises of Charity, and its fruits

CHAP. XIV

On watching and striving against temptations

CHAP. XV

On bearing one another's burthens

CHAP. XVI

Of the love of Christ, and of hatred of the world

CHAP. XVII

On the imitation of the most holy life of our Lord Jesus Christ

CHAP. XVIII

Of the eternal praise of God

THE VALLEY OF LILIES

THE PROLOGUE TO THIS LITTLE BOOK

CHAP. I

On the three-fold state of human life

CHAP. II

Of the praise of God, in the poverty of devotion

CHAP. III

On the proving of the devout by contraries

CHAP. IV

Of the true lover of God

CHAP. V

On the gratitude of the soul, for every good

CHAP. VI

On the conformity of the devout soul to the Cross

CHAP. VII

On the walking of a pure soul with God

CHAP. VIII

On the peace of heart, and rest in God

CHAP. IX

Of recollection of heart with God

CHAP. X

On watching and prayer against temptations

CHAP. XI

On the fear of eternal punishment, as a preservative against the vices of the flesh and pride of spirit

CHAP. XII

On the memory of our Lord's passion; as a remedy against dissipation

CHAP. XIII

On the invocation of the holy name of Jesus, and of the blessed Mary, his Virgin Mother

CHAP. XIV

On the mighty struggle against vice, after the example of the saints

CHAP. XV

On Steadfastness

CHAP. XVI

On divine consolation in tribulation for Christ's sake

CHAP. XVII

On watching over the conscience, in every place and at all times

CHAP. XVIII

On Solitude and Silence

CHAP. XIX

On the refuge of the poor, in God their helper

CHAP. XX

On the poor and sick Lazarus

CHAP. XXI

On the clear understanding of the Holy Scriptures

CHAP. XXII

On the great merit of patience for the sake of Christ

CHAP. XXIII

On the good conversation of the humble monk

CHAP. XXIV

On cautious speaking, and brotherly compassion

CHAP. XXV

On the uncertain hour of death, and the speedy end of this life

CHAP. XXVI

Of the eternal praise of God, and the desire of eternal glory

CHAP. XXVII

Of the praise of the Holy Angels in Heaven

CHAP. XXVIII

A prayer of the devout lover of God

CHAP. XXIX

On union of the heart with God

CHAP. XXX

On True Peace, to be sought for in God alone

CHAP. XXXI

On directing the intention to God

CHAP. XXXII

The prayer of a humble and contrite spirit

CHAP. XXXIII

Of holy fellowship with Jesus and with his saints

CHAP. XXXIV

On placing your sovereign good and farthest aim in God alone

APPENDIX

No. I.—p. 89

CAP. XVIII.—De æternâ laude Dei.

No. II.—p. 226

CAP. XXVII.—De laude Sanctorum Angelorum in cœlo.

No. III.—p. 251

CAP. XXXII.—Oratio humilis, et contriti spiritus.

No. IV.—p. 271

CAP. XXXIV.—Juxta finem.

THE LITTLE GARDEN OF ROSES AND
VALLEY OF LILIES

PREFACE

IT is a matter for wonder, that so few of the works of the B. Thomas à Kempis are known to the English reader; and this the more, that they all breathe the same meek and warm spirit of piety and devotion we meet with in that golden book attributed so popularly to his name, and this moreover to such an extent, that it is difficult to believe that there should ever have been any hardy enough to deny, that the author of these, and of “The Imitation of Christ,” were identical.

Into this controversy, which, like too many others, has given rise to much unseemly bitterness, we have no desire to enter, as such a theme would be unfitting and disproportionate both to the spirit and size of this little volume; but, waiving all discussion, we subjoin the following catalogue of his works, that the English reader may from their number judge and share in our surprise that there are so many unknown to him, when the great majority are willing to take the household name of a Kempis, for all that is sublime in piety and beautiful in devotion.

- *1. Sermones ad Novitios, 3 partes.
- *2. Sermones novem, ad Fratres.
- *3. Conciones et meditationes triginta sex utilissimæ.
- *4. Soliloquium Animæ.
- 5. Hortulus Rosarum.
- *6. Vallis Liliorum.
- *7. De tribus Tabernaculis.
- 8. De Disciplinâ Claustralium.
- 9. De fidei Dispensatore.
- 10. Hospitale Pauperum.
- 11. Dialogus Novitiorum.
- 12. Exercitia Spiritualia.
- 13. Doctrinale Juvenum.
- *14. De verâ Compunctione.

15. De Solitudine.
16. De Silentio.
17. De Recognitione Propriæ fragilitatis.
18. Enchiridion Monachorum.
19. Manuale Parvulorum.
20. De Elevatione Mentis in Deum.
21. Alphabetum parvum Monachi in Schola Christi.
22. Consolatio Pauperum.
- *23. Orationes Piæ.
24. De mortificatione sui ipsius.
25. De humilitate.
26. De Vitâ bonâ et Pacificâ.
27. Vita boni Monachi (in rhyme).
28. Cantica Spiritualia.
29. Vita Gerardi magni.
30. Vita Florentii.
31. Vita Luberti Berneri.
32. Vita Henrici Brune.
33. Vita Amilii Burensis.
34. Vita Jacobi de Viana.
35. Vita Johannis Cacabi, (Ketel).
36. Vita Arnoldi Schoonehoven.
37. Vita B. Lidwini, Virginis.
38. Epistolæ Sex.
39. Orationes Piæ.
40. Cantica Spiritualia.

Of these the greater number (some from their very title, such as that *De Disciplina Claustralium*) would appear at first sight to be more exclusively addressed to such as had embraced a religious state; yet there is so much practical piety, such a warmth of devotion, and knowledge of the interior life, suited to all, both lay and cleric, that any or all are well worthy of an English dress, and such as might ripen the good seed into goodly fruit in the heart of the reader. Moreover, we should remember, that however unpalatable to the world the strictness of a religious life may be, and this the more so, perhaps, from our long estrangement from the example of such a state in these countries, that notwithstanding the leaven of the monastic

virtues is equally applicable to ourselves, and as necessary to us who live in the world, as their practise is to the monk, who aims at a higher grade of perfection within the bounds of his convent. Of these none are more frequently inculcated by our author than humility. Humility is as the keystone of his mind. Every sentiment he breathes is held up thereby, and as St. Gregory says she is “the mother and queen of all virtues,” so in every page of his writings, the heart of the reader is sweetly led to seek an increase of virtue by the path of humility, that leads through the Valley of Lilies and the little Garden of Roses.

Those works marked by an asterisk have already been before the public in a selection entitled, “*Viator Christianus, or the Christian Traveller*,” 8vo. Dublin, 1804. But of the two now translated from the original, that of “*The little Garden of Roses*,” appears for the first time. Should the present be approved of, it is not unlikely that others may follow, for there are many in the above list much akin to the two now presented to the reader’s notice, equally worthy of attention, and equally filled with maxims of virtue upon which all may meditate with profit, and convert to a practical result.

Of the manner in which the following work appears, there is little to be said, but to crave the indulgence of the reader, and, perhaps to apologise for rendering into rhythm some detached passages, wherein the author seemed to rise with his subject into greater breadth of style, sentiment, and expression, and as it were to allure the translator to adopt a measure more suited to express such a change. If he has done wrong, he trusts that the opportunity it gives him of quoting the original in the appendix, will more than make amends for the error he may have committed.

FEAST OF ST. IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA, 1840.

THE LITTLE GARDEN OF ROSES

CHAP. I

On seeking the Company of the good, and flying that of the bad

“Cum sancto sanctus eris, et cum perverso perverteris,” (Psalm 17:26.)

“With the holy, thou wilt be holy; and with the perverse, thou wilt be perverted.”

BE diligent, beloved brother in Christ, lest ye be seduced by the company of false and wicked men, or of those who live without discipline; but draw near to the virtuous, to those who are friends of order, and well instructed, from whom you will only hear words that are good, full of comfort and edification.

For as the unkindled coal warms and glows when thrown on a burning fire, so a lukewarm Christian, in the company of a pious and fervent brother, often recovers his piety and fervour, and as he grows in the knowledge of good, acquires also the sweet odour of virtue.

It was thus that the apostles, from following Christ, became holy men, and received the fulness of the Holy Spirit.

It was thus that Mark from following St. Peter, became learned in the holy gospel, which with much gladness he heard from the very lips of that blessed apostle.

It was thus that from his infancy Timothy, by following St. Paul, became learned in the Holy Scriptures; and farthermore, when the grace of God advanced in him, was ordained bishop, at Ephesus, by the Master who loved him, as a loving father does his only child.

It was thus that Polycarp, the disciple of Saint John the Apostle, became a glowing preacher of the faith to the people, and suffered with Saint Ignatius a glorious martyrdom,—that our blessed father Augustine, instructed and

baptized by Saint Ambrose, became that glorious doctor of holy Church, whose fame is spread over all the earth,—and so of that holy youth Maurus, who, following the footsteps of Saint Benedict, was thereafter, by God's blessing, a holy abbot, as famed for his virtues as for his miracles.

And thus it was that Bernard, that man well beloved of God, in the school of the venerable Stephen, Abbot of Citeaux, became the light of religion in his order, where he shone like a clear star in the heavens.

Innumerable are the examples, both ancient and modern, which prove that the society of the good tends to the safety of the soul, and that of the wicked to its perdition; that good instruction is profitable, and evil conversation dangerous; and that silence and solitude increase our spiritual advancement, while the dissipation and tumult of the world retard its growth.

Live then alone, and labour in the service of God; or join thyself to the devout and holy, with whom you may discourse on the virtues of Jesus Christ.

But see that ye fathom not through vain curiosity the holy mysteries of religion; seek ye rather to search into your own faults, and to apply to the wounds of your soul, such means and remedies as may restore it to healthful soundness.

CHAP. II

On flying the world, and the snares of the devil

“Audiens, sapiens, sapientior erit.” (Prov. 1:5.)

“A wise man shall hear, and shall be wiser.”

Ye young who yet love virtue, hearken to the words of eternal wisdom; from these you will draw more instruction than from the combined discourse of all earth’s wisdom.

According to the words of the Apostle St. John: “Love not the world, nor the things which are in the world.” (1 John, 2:15.) Cast them from you as dung—reject them as poison.

Think of eternity, and their temptations shall cease to allure.

Avoid every thing that may hurt your soul; be not an object of scandal to any one, and watch well that ye let not drop one unbecoming word.

Should your father according to the flesh seek to turn you from the service of God, answer him that you have a Father who is in heaven. Should your mother or sister oppose the execution of your designs, tell them they are mortal, and may be deceived, but “He who made me, He shall guide me.”

He that gives himself up to the service of God, shall want for nothing.

Commend to the keeping of God all your friends; pray for their conversion and perseverance in well-doing; ask above all that their attachment to the things of this world may never make them offend God, and thereby lose the kingdom of heaven.

The dissipation of frequent visits will bring trouble on your souls, but “the world passes away, and the concupiscence thereof.” (1 John 2:17.)

Even so you also shall pass away, and all that are dear to you.

2. “Many are the snares of the devil, and they that will become rich, or great, fall into temptation, and many unprofitable and hurtful desires.” (1 Tim. 6:9.)

We have daily snares in our meat and drink, in our wandering eye, our idle tongue, the inconstancy of our hearts, and distaste for good works.

Honour, riches, and power, are but vanity, and what seek you in the world; or what do you desire to see in the world, which is nothing and vanity? for all is vanity, frailty, and deceit; but the love of God, and perseverance in well-doing.

You cannot love God perfectly, till you despise yourself, and the world, for the love of God, who will render to you “an hundred fold now in this time, and in the world to come life everlasting.” (St. Mark 10:30.)

3. Oh, fellow pilgrim and brother, let it not seem hard to be withdrawn from your friends and acquaintance, which are often an obstacle to your eternal salvation, and the means of lessening the divine consolations.

Where are those with whom you have laughed and sported?—They are gone, and I am left alone. Where are the visions of yesterday?—They have melted away. Where is our meat and our drink? They are past for ever. And have your privations been your bane, or your abstinence been hurtful?—You must reply that they have hurt you not at all. Acknowledge then that he is wise who renounces the world and its pleasures for the service, the reasonable service, of God; and woe to those whom the world inebriates with its charms; for soon all pleasant company flies away, and is lost in death. All those I loved are dead, and will come no more again, and I shall follow them at the call of God. They were as passing guests on earth—I too am a pilgrim. They have left all—as I must forsake all. As a shadow they past away—I too like them shall pass.

CHAP. III

On true wisdom to be sought of God

“Beatus vir, qui invenit sapientiam.” (Prov. 3:13.)

“Blessed is the man that findeth wisdom”

1. Seek ye the true wisdom, which Christ hath taught, and pointed out to you by his example.

He is truly wise who hates iniquity, who speaks the truth, and works the works of justice; and he that leads a sober and chaste life, who is pious, humble and devout, and who shuns the perilous rocks of temptation, possesses true wisdom, and the favour of God and of men. His conscience is pure—sorrow assails him not—peace is his possession—and God often pours into his breast, consolations, that the world can neither know nor relish.

2. But the wisdom of the world is vanity, and foolishness in the sight of God. It leads into error those that love it, and to final sorrow those whom it crowns with its shouts of triumph. For the wisdom of the flesh is the death of the soul, and striketh alike all those who give themselves up to the alluring pleasures of sense; for pain and sorrowful regret are all that remain after the shameful enjoyments of the flesh.

But true wisdom is drawn from the profound words and holy actions of Christ, which invite us to despise the world, to fly from its pleasures, to curb our flesh, to bear with sorrow, to bow to toil, and to cherish virtue.

CHAP. IV

On warring against our own vices

“Regnum cœlorum vim patitur.” (St. Matth. 11:12.)

“The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence.”

Many begin, but few persevere; how very small a number attain perfection!

For either we too easily fall before the allurements of the flesh, or pride lifts up its head, or we are cast down by adversity.

Alas! how seldom is found one who loves God purely, overcomes himself completely, and makes an entire renunciation of himself.

“Perfection,” said a devout person, “is a rare bird; it is too difficult to overcome oneself.” But he that works not hard to become virtuous, shall never be filled with the sweetness of virtue.

Every virtue has its particular sweetness to refresh him that worketh well; but he that clings to vice, begets an evil end, makes shipwreck of his honour, destroys repose, lays up for himself a store of infirmities, increases sorrow, and deprives himself of the relish of what is good and virtuous; but he that denies himself lawful pleasures, increases the surety of resisting such as are unlawful.

2. He that muzzles the mouth of the hound, need not fear his bark; so he that keeps strict silence shall not offend with his lips.

He that lives retired and in silence, is far removed from falsehood and bickering; from cursing and detraction; from anger and murmuring.

He that hearkens not to evil discourse, and shuts his eyes on the vanities of this world, more easily avoids its snares, and turns away his thoughts from its vain imaginations; for a watch over the senses is the foundation of purity, the discipline of peace, the mirror of devotion.

When wrath takes possession of the breast, wisdom takes to flight even from the wise. He that speaks hastily is like a snarling hound; but a meek answer breaks the violence of wrath, and gives to the afflicted roses in the stead of thorns.

Blessed is the prudent tongue, for it heals the wounds of the hasty.

3. He that resisteth his evil inclinations in their birth, when they show themselves but young and limber, shall more easily destroy them than when their roots are deep.

He that is constant in the heavenly exercises of prayer and meditation, is like the prudent gardener, who plants roses and lilies in his borders—both have sweet joy in store; but he with the holy angels, in the heavenly paradise.

He that preserves purity in soul and body is like God's angels; but he that yields to his evil inclinations, and takes pleasure in the depravity of his thoughts, is the bonds slave of Satan.

It may be a hard struggle to resist the seductions of vice; but it shall be much harder to awake in the fire of hell, there to be tormented for ever.

One heat allays another; and nail drives out nail; but laughter is put to flight by sorrow.

When the love of God enters the heart, all earthly and passing affections flee far away.

He is wise that can despise the countless lures of earth, for the dignities of the tiara or the crown, with all their privileges, are as nothing; the end of all is, death and the grave, worms and ashes. How high soever man may exalt himself, he is nothing—death strips him of all. But happy is that pilgrim whose home is in heaven.

CHAP. V

“On the needful grace of devotion”

“Væ vobis, qui ridetis, quia flebitis.” (S. Luc. 6:25.)

“Woe to you that laugh, for you shall weep.”

1. As virtue cannot exist with vice, so devotion is not to be acquired in the joyousness of feast and festival, but in sorrow and silence.

Perfection in virtue cannot be obtained at once, but by little and little, by much groaning and sorrow; upheld by the firm resolve of increasing in virtue every day; by doing ‘violence to ones’ self; yet oftener by fasting, watching, prayers, meditation, study, holy reading, manual labour, abstaining from idle talk, and remaining willingly in secret.

2. All joy that comes not from God, passes quickly away, and leaves the soul stained and wounded.

Words that edify, bring joy to those that hear them; harsh words give pain to our friends; but idle words rob us of the fruit that time would have produced.

Be diligent in doing good; patient in bearing with evil; and you will be happy all the days of your life, for in both you will ever praise God.

It seldom happens that you are not in one or other of these states, sadness or joy; but happy is he who turns all to good, and who draws profit from adversity.

Whoever loves God, receives from His hand, the bitter as well as the sweet; and both with equal gratitude: and he who holds little by man, or by his own exertion, but puts all his trust in God, walketh in the way that is right and good, and nothing shall turn him out of it.

CHAP. VI

Of hearing and reading the Divine Word

“Beati, qui audiunt Verbum Dei.” (S. Luc. 11:28.)

“Blessed are they who keep the word of God.”

Human consolations are worthless if they hinder such as are divine.

When you hear the Holy Scripture read, remember it is God who speaks to you; humble yourselves then, and receive his words with a grateful heart.

The truth is not to be despised because of the simplicity and want of learning in him who declares it; but he that leads a good life teacheth well; and he that readeth well, is a messenger from God.

A faithful teacher passes over in silence what would be hurtful, and proclaims what is profitable, without pretence or varnish; for pure simple truth always sounds pleasant in the ear.

Subtle discourses are hurtful to simple souls; and those which flatter vanity often lead the spirit into error.

He who aims at point in his discourse, at the expense of truth, is the enemy of peace, and those who hear him shall hardly avoid scandal.

He that passeth judgment with discretion is worthy of praise, but he that judges harshly and without mercy, is unworthy of mercy.

He that is of a hasty tongue does himself much harm—he oppresses the innocent without a cause—lays himself open to his hidden enemies, and casts ridicule in the face of day on those whose conduct is good.

2. He that is of deceitful lips, abuses the confidence of those that listen to him, and so his friends shall be few.

Publish not scandal; for it is well to be silent: proclaim the truth, for it is salutary; be modest, for it is reasonable; hurt no one, for it is just; be useful to all, for such is piety; and edify thy neighbour by word and deed, for such is religion.

The prudent man thinks before he acts; changes not unreasonably; speaks with reserve of what he is ignorant of; and affirms not lightly what is doubtful.

The silence of the mouth is most profitable to the peace of the heart: but the mouth of the fool is always open and ready for strife.

He that seeks to please God, watches over his heart and lips; and trembles lest he lose the grace of devotion, or give offence to the repose of love.

Fair words, albeit many fill not the bag; nor shall a blaze of eloquent words sanctify the idle or the proud; but he that doeth good shall find good.

CHAP. VII

On Divine consolation in tribulation

“Juxta est Dominus his, qui tribulato sunt corde.” (Ps. 33:19.)

“The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a contrite heart.”

1. How far advanced soever in the practice of virtue and devotion, no one is exempted from the burthen of sorrows in this world.

But if thou be in tribulation and sorrow of heart, remember that thou art with Jesus Christ, nailed to the cross; and if in prayer you receive the consolations of the Holy Spirit, then are you raised again from the dead: like Christ, you celebrate the Pasch with him in newness of life, rejoicing in heart.

When words of harshness are addressed to you, think that you are made to drink of the chalice of the Lord, for the salvation of your souls.

2. Murmur not, but drink the bitter draught with resignation—the Lord himself will be your sure defence in life and in death.

God will never forget you.

For oh! what is more glorious, than by silence and patience, to close the mouth of him who speaks evil against you: by the example of Jesus Christ, who was silent before Pilate, when they brought false witness against him. (St. Matth. 26)

You are not better, doubtless, than your God, who, for the love of you, was scourged with cruel mockings, and at last put to death by the wicked.

Man knows not how far his virtue and worth may go till he has been tried in the furnace of tribulation.

Christ has many servants, who come to him, and seat themselves lovingly at his table; but he finds few who would follow him into the desert fasting.

3. The true lover of the crucified Jesus refuses not to suffer, and to be persecuted by the wicked; to the end that he may become more conformable

to the likeness of his Saviour, who bowed himself to the ignominy and scandal of the cross.

“For to live is Christ; but to suffer and die for him is the greatest gain.”
(Ad, Phil. 1:21.)

The more thy love for God is fervent, the less shall you dread death; and the more lively shall be thy desire for the dissolution of the body, that you may live happy with Christ, and share in the joy of his holy angels for all eternity.

Happy is the soul that loveth Jesus tenderly; in whom the love of eternal good, begets contempt for such as pass away; who endures with patience the evils of this life for the name of Jesus; who prostrates himself humbly at his feet, and beseeches him to make him advance still more and more with perseverance and constancy in the paths of virtue.

CHAP. VIII

Of the joy of a good conscience in the Holy Spirit

“Gaudete in Domino semper.” (A.D. Phil. 4:4.)

“Rejoice in the Lord always.”

Drive far from you that gloomy melancholy which begets disgust and rancour in the soul.

Learn the sweet and holy practice of meditating on the life and passion of Jesus Christ; you will find in this exercise real consolation both against the heaviness of your hearts, and against temptations.

A good life is worthy of praise, but a lukewarm conversation is burthensome to all.

A good conscience begets inward joy; but an evil conscience engenders remorse.

Strive always to do well, and you shall enjoy a good and lasting peace.

You have nothing to fear from the malice of the sinner, if you yourself keep steadfast in the path of justice.

A good conversation produces joy of heart, and his just praise is spread abroad.

Undeserved praise soon melts away in the mouth of him who giveth it.

For the flattery of a fool is more hurtful than the harsh censure of the just.

2. Humble prayer pierces the heavens, disarms the anger of God, obtains his mercies, and makes the snares of the evil one of none avail.

A humble confession deserves forgiveness; but a frivolous excuse aggravates the offence.

Sincere contrition wipes away the stain of sin; and fervent meditation shortens the penance.

Idle talk weakens the grace of devotion, but good discourse increases the joy of our soul.

We ought in every place to keep a cautious watch over our senses; and a spiritual retreat is profitable to him whose occupations call him abroad.

Frequent prayer is a sure protection; but the silence of the lips is the very roof-tree of peace (*domicilium pacis*.)

Many begin their course with ardour, but only those who persevere unto the end shall obtain the crown of glory.

The yoke of Christ is sweet to those who love; but burthensome to the lukewarm: it is bitter to the proud, but light to the meek, and dear to the humble.

Sweet Jesus, maketh all things sweet and light.

The carnal man seeks only sensual gratifications: but the spiritual man has a horror of such things, and avoids them.

The most heavy affliction of the just is that he cannot extinguish in his soul all vicious emotions: but why does God permit this to be so? it is that he may be continually humble, and that he may implore the Divine aid unceasingly.

3. Even as the proud man glories in his honours, and the rich in his riches, so he that is truly humble rejoices in poverty, and in self-abasement.

Christ, the King of Heaven, is the exceeding glory and riches of the servants of God.

Out of God, all affection is corrupt, all pleasure vain, all abundance poverty.

Nothing, indeed, can satisfy the thirst of the soul, but God alone, who created it.

The spirit of that man is truly free, which covets none of the things which are of this world.

To act well, and suffer evil, to praise God in all things, and never to draw vanity from his good gifts—such is the life of the just.

He that despises himself, and ascribes to God all that he has of good in his thoughts, words, or actions, gives to Him the praise that is truly His due.

When thoughts, then, of vain glory come over you, consent not to them, but forthwith cry out humbly with the prophet, “Not unto us, not unto us, but to thy name be the glory.” (Ps. 113:3.)

Man's most glorious triumph consists in overcoming his affections, in surmounting his dislikes, and in bearing with resignation whatever grievously afflicts him.

CHAP. IX

On the good conversation of an humble brother

“Humilibus autem Deus dat gratiam.” (Sti. Jacob. 4:6.)

“God giveth grace to the humble.”

1. A person consecrated to God, ought to be adorned with humility and modesty in all his words and actions, and should never be occupied in trifles.

There is every reason to believe that a young man engaged in the service of God, will lead a holy life, when, during his noviciate, he practices humility, and speaks little, above all in the presence of his elders.

He that does not accustom himself to listen, and who learns not to keep silence, will seldom attain to knowledge and wisdom.

Many pass for ignorant, for this only reason, that they are unmannerly.

To obey readily, to pray fervently, to meditate devoutly, to work with diligence, to study with pleasure, to fly the tumult of the world, to love solitude—such are the virtues that give true devotion and inward peace to such as are consecrated to God. (Ad monachum.)

We read in Genesis, “That God had respect to the offerings of Abel, but rejected those of Cain;” and why? because Abel was innocent and humble, Cain envious and perverse.

Be then as Abel, in bearing patiently with such as oppress you; strive not with Cain, lest you lose the peace of your soul, and the reputation of a good name; for it is better for you to lose your property, than to offend God, to outrage your brother, and to wound charity.

2. If you would have treasure in heaven, cast from you the burthen of earth; and if your aim be eternal glory, despise the passing grandeur of this

world.

If you desire peace, beware of the house of contention, and the root of wrath—if you would be great in heaven, be as a little one on earth.

Seek not to be justified in the eyes of man, for their praise is delusive, when the witness of your conscience is against you.

The bold and the babbler are alike blame-worthy, both oerstep the bounds of rectitude.

The fool-hardy perish in heaps, for they presume on their own strength: but many of the weak are strengthened, for they call on the name of the Lord, and put their trust in him.

The humble and the meek are loved by all—but the severe and hard man is shunned by his neighbours.

The patient and the silent man triumphs over his enemies by courteous charity.

He that willingly lends his service to others, and pities them in their sorrows, increases the number of his friends; but he that cannot keep silence in season, shall be covered with confusion before many.

3. He that knows how to advance in virtue, to amend himself, and to deserve the esteem of his brethren by the practice of virtue—that man is wise, and possesses true knowledge.

He is strong who resists his vices with all his power; he is a sovereign Lord who reigns over the depraved affections of his heart—he is a brave soldier, and armed at point, who by the arms of continence subdues his flesh; but he that lives chastely on earth, deserves a place among the angels of heaven.

The chaste man is the friend of God, the companion of angels, the brother of virgins, the beloved fellow-citizen of the saints, for he that joins humility to chastity, triumphs over the evil one, while he puts to flight the immodest.

That prelate is truly eminent, who rules over himself with the rod of virtue, and gives a good example to those that are subject to him.

He that imitates the virtuous is worthy of their praise; and that man is truly noble and free, who is ennobled by virtue.

That man is fair and comely, who is pure from sin, but however well adorned the sinner be outwardly, he still is foul and hideous within.

He that is full of the grace of God, and lusts not after this world's honours, is both rich and happy; but both ignorance and folly is the lot of

him who refuses the good, and embraces the bane of his soul.

To seek the things which are eternal, and to despise such as “perish in the using,” this is divine wisdom.

4. He is wise who departs not from the doctrine of the fathers, and who preserves in its integrity the deposit of the faith.

The love of God, and the keeping of his commandments—this is true wisdom.

If any one apply to you for instruction, point out to him the path of humility, and walk yourself before him therein.

He that is truly humble, knows not vanity—disclaims praise—rejoices in contempt—and keeps no place in his memory for wrong or insult.

CHAP. X

On the instability of the human heart

“Qui manet in me, et ego in eo, hic fert fructum multum.” (St. Joh. 15:5.)

“He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit.”

The thoughts and affections of man change and vary unceasingly; but all are vain and impure which come not from God.

Oh lustful and insatiable heart of man! what misery and bitterness is thine in forsaking thy God! why toil after empty trifles that can bring thee no consolation, nor fulfil thy wants?

What do you do, or whither do you go astray to look for happiness?

Return, return speedily into your own hearts; see in how many things you have offended, and look that you repair the evil you have done.

Make ready in your soul a dwelling-place for thy God; and cast away the rush of vain imaginings, and all eternal cares, that you may be filled with the consolations of the Holy Spirit.

2. He that often goes abroad is rarely the better for it; for all that glitters so fair in the world, leads to nothing real.

The eye is not satisfied with what it sees; and what strikes the ear filleth not the heart; and if all be not referred to the praise of the Creator, all that you see is but an empty vision.

Hence the holy David sings—“Thou hast given me, O Lord, a delight in thy doings, and in the works of thy hands, I shall rejoice.” (Ps. 91:5.)

No created thing is steadfast; there is nothing abiding but God, our sovereign good.

Abide in the truth; it will deliver you from falsehood, from iniquity, and from thy wandering fancies.

The slander that is falsely coined against one’s neighbour, shall return on the head of him that invents it.

Christ is the truth; and he that follows him loves the truth, and all virtue.

He that sacrifices truth to temporal advantage, fortune or honours, makes shipwreck of his faith, and bids adieu to the glory which is virtue's reversion.

God is truth, and permits not falsehood to remain long concealed.

The wicked may for some time veil his conduct under the mantle of dissimulation; but truth shall prevail at last, and the hypocrite be confounded in the hour he thinks not of.

Let not your thoughts or your desires be set on any thing but what is just or pleasing to God; so shall you practise virtue, and work good works for the glory of God.

3. He that speaks the truth, and hates iniquity, shall be great in the kingdom of heaven: but he that works iniquity, and hates the truth, shall be tormented with eternal punishment.

Abide in truth and in charity, and thus you shall be pleasing to God, to angels and men.

Fear not—the wicked may happily gain over you some passing advantage, but God will grant to him who suffers from his injustice, goods that are infinitely greater and eternal.

Do you wish your soul to dwell in peace, and your conscience to reproach you in nothing? Be humble, be patient, be obedient—for

There is no enemy to be dreaded so dangerous as yourself, when your passions are roused.

Look carefully into your own faults, and you will find little leisure or inclination to weigh in the balance the actions of others.

CHAP. XI

On Trust in God in time of trouble

“Spera in Domino, et fac bonitatem.” (Ps. 36:3.)

“Trust in the Lord, and do good.”

1. Glory not in the temporal advantages you may enjoy, nor put your trust in friends and familiars; for all things are uncertain, and full of peril; but he that puts his trust in God, and calls upon Him in the time of need, shall not be forsaken in his worst tribulation.

He whose life is good, whose words are edifying, who offends no one, who keeps a strict watch against iniquity, and over his evil thoughts, shall enjoy much peace. Shut the door of thy house, and thou shalt sleep in peace.

He that provides not every day some good action, to oppose as a shield to the attacks of the evil one, shall fall an easy prey to the enemy.

Many cease to pray, and to resist temptations, when all goes not well with them; but virtue is not to be acquired without pain and strife, nor maintained without assiduous care.

A dissipated and inconstant mind abhors discipline and flies from its cell, like a bird from captivity.

Are you violently tempted or hardly pressed, or mocked, or loaded with confusion? despair not: reflect forthwith that your sins justly deserve the censure and despite of men; suffer patiently, and say trustfully, “It is good for me that thou hast humbled me, O Lord, that I may learn thy justifications.”—(Ps. 118:71.)

In temptation or tribulation, man learns how needful to him is God: for then he acknowledges his wants, and feels the greatness of his defects. For he is both an unfaithful and a foolish servant, who makes use of his master’s goods to minister to his own vanity, and through them to despise others.

3. He that despises his brethren, or thinks himself better than they, outrages God and all his saints; and we shall fall into the like error, should we cease to be humble, and cast aside the remembrance of our own faults, or cease to weep over them.

It is enough for each to bear his own burthen; why then do we busy ourselves with the conduct of others? Why charge ourselves with a burthen heavier than we can bear?

It happens sometimes, that the faults, the errors, and the negligences of a brother, become public, in order to make him more humble, and more compassionate to the weaknesses of his brethren, and to dispose him to guide with all charity into the way of peace, those who err. Taught by his own experience, he says, “He is a man, and not an angel; it has happened to him, as it has already happened to me; we are brethren—my intentions were bad, and his may perhaps have been good. God is the only one who can never err, nor ever do ill.”

Why do you mock when your brother falls? “Let him that thinketh himself to stand, take heed lest he fall.”—(1 Cor. 10:12.) Here it was that you fell.

The shame of an open fall often entirely extinguishes all emotions of vain-glory.

CHAP. XII

On the virtue of prayer, and the profit of holy reading

“Sine intermissione orata.” (1 Thes. 5:17.)

“Pray without ceasing.”—And why? Because we are girt about by tribulations and temptations; by the snares and suggestions of evil angels.

Tidings of good come rarely, war pervades all; fear within; combat without; there is no day which has no toil, no hour that we may not have the horrors of death under our eyes.

By the just judgment of God, are the nations around us ravaged by fire and sword; for by these scourges he would punish the crimes of the wicked, and lead his elect to seek for eternal blessings.

Unceasing prayer, then, is of the highest importance, to oppose as a breastplate of proof against the fiery darts of the enemy.

He that ceases to pray, renounces the conflict; and he that strives not in battle, is already overcome, and has lost the crown of victory.

But, who can pray always? and fight always?

All things are possible to him that calls on the Lord, and puts his trust in him; for “the Lord is nigh unto all that call upon him,—to all that call upon him in truth.” (Ps. 144:18.)

If you cannot pray always with the lips, pray with the spirit, and in the heart; by the fervour of your desires, and the purity of your intentions.

A firm desire to do good, and to serve God, is as a continual sacrifice offered to him on the altar of your hearts: for he “prays without ceasing,” who never ceases to do well.

He that mourns not over his past transgressions, and who sighs for farther growth in virtue, “ceases not to pray.” Say then with holy David:—“Lord,

all my desire is before thee, and my groaning is not hidden from thee.” (Ps. 37:10.)

2. The word of God, and holy reading, is most useful to recal our spirit, when it is distracted by external cares, or by some passion from within, that would domineer over it.

Good reading teaches us the right path of life; good examples excite our imitation, and prayer obtains from heaven the needful grace to follow these.

Reading of God is well; praying to God is better; but prayer for God, is the best of all.

Blessed is he, who in all his words and actions, proposes to himself no other end than the glory of God; desiring that in all and above all, he may be praised and blessed for ever.

3. How can it be said that a religious is devout? and how can he become so, if he prefer idle babbling before reading, study, and prayer?

He that takes pleasure in speaking or listening to frivolous things, barter his soul for a pitiful price.

In all temptation or tribulation, fly to prayer, as to your soul’s harbour. The more readily you have recourse to it, the more will it be efficacious. The more you delay, the less advantage shall you obtain: the more frequent it be, the more profit will you draw from it: the more fervent it be, the more pleasing to God.

God, who is good and merciful, loves us to ask of him: he furnishes us with occasions for prayer, and he hath promised that we shall be heard; since he hath said “Ask and you shall receive.” (Matt. 17:17.)

He invites us to prayer by his discourses,—leads us thither by his example,—constrains us by his threats, and encourages us by his favours. He punishes our negligence by adversity; rewards our submission by prosperity; and in this morning and evening of pains and consolations, is our one day of life accomplished. (Gen. 1)

Moreover, God often communicates to those who pray devoutly, who love retreat and silence, interior consolations, which he refuses to those who love the world and its idle conversation.

4. But ye who love good tidings, come and entertain you with Jesus Christ; listen to him as he speaks of the kingdom of God,—of the judgment to come,—of the Heavenly Jerusalem; of the happiness which the inhabitants of heaven, the orders and choirs of angels, enjoy; of the glory

and honour of the elect, and of the recompense of the saints, who shall spend all eternity in joy and gladness.

Hearken to the prophets, as they unfold the hidden mysteries of Christ, and declare the chastisements which lower over the sinner.

Listen to the apostles and evangelists, as they publish abroad the wonderful works and miracles of Jesus Christ.

Listen to the doctors of the Church, as they speak with eloquent tongues of holy things, and explain what is obscure in the Scriptures; as they give bright colours to the life of virtue, and refute the vain reasoning of schism and heresy.

May each one of us choose in these instructions, the truths most suited to our taste or wants. Pass not over with disdain such as seem simple, and censure not those which are above your intellect; for it is folly to reprove the wise, but it is impiety to condemn the saints and men inspired of God.

5. Labour steadfastly then to learn the most simple truths, and humbly resolve to practise the least, however small; and if it be to thy advantage, God will give you soon the knowledge of higher mysteries.

It is written: "To him who knoweth to do good, and doth it not, to him it is sin." (St. James 4:17.)

He that is stored with knowledge, and makes not use of it to regulate his conduct; and he that reads, but profits not by what he reads, are like those who go away empty and famished, from a table that is abundantly spread.

As he that works little, shall be long in want; so he that seldom prays, shall be long lukewarm.

He that discourses against vice, and corrects not his own, scatters good seed amongst thorns.

And little fruit will be gathered from many words, if one comes to prayer without first casting out his evil thoughts.

Happy is he that with earnest care, casts forth from his soul all impurity; and who suffers nothing to remain in the secret of his heart, that can wound the chaste regards of his heavenly spouse.

The humble confession of sin, proceeding from a heart truly contrite and lowly, is a sure means of cleansing it from vice.

6. The pious Christian finds pleasure in prayer; the studious man in his books; the devout soul, in the practice of virtue; the proud, in honours; the humble, in contempt: the rich, in his riches; the beggar, in his alms; the

glutton, in his eating and drinking; the idle in his frivolous talk: the sober man, in his temperance; the wise, in his wisdom; the good monk, in submission to his rule;—but none of these enjoyments are to be compared with those which flow from the love of God, and the peace of a good conscience.

Would you triumph over your most dangerous enemies? fly, speak little—be not angry—pray—fast—study—work—be diligent.

A holy man thinks holily, speaks truly, and acts justly; despises things present, and meditates on those that are eternal.

The humble man receives the advice that is given to him; the prudent man avoids danger; the patient suffers with resignation, and the diligent neglects not his occupation; and he that shuns not small faults, shall fall into great ones.

7. If one be lukewarm in the morning, he will rarely be found fervent at the close of the day.

He that springs from inaction to put himself promptly to work, feels an inward satisfaction, and if he be not honoured by men, shall be well pleasing in the sight of God, which is far better and infinitely more to be prized; for God giveth himself to the saints, to be their reward and the eternal recompense of their good works, their toil, and sufferings.

The idle man is never satisfied in his idleness, but the virtuous man denies himself even of things that are lawful.

He that is founded on humility, and counts as nothing the honours of this world, shall walk with an assured step in the way that is good.

That man lives and acts wisely, who, to please God alone, separates himself from the world to live retired; and who, full of contempt and disrelish for earthly goods, longs only for those of heaven, and ever places the love of God above all.

CHAP. XIII

On the praises of Charity, and its fruits

“Omnia vestra in charitate fiant.” (1 ad Cor. 16:14.)

“Let all your things be done in charity.”

1. Charity is a noble virtue, and surpasses all virtues, knowledge and gifts.

It purifies the soul from sin; it warms and inflames, and fills it with a wondrous sweetness, making it love God, with all its heart, and intellect, and affections.

It justifies the sinner, and sets the bond-slave free; of an enemy it makes a friend; of a foreigner, a fellow-citizen; of a stranger, a familiar. It teaches the inconstant, constancy; the proud, humility; the perverse, meekness: it gives to the lukewarm, fervour; to the broken heart it brings joy; it opens the hand of the avaricious; it wakes the carnal man to spiritual life; it gives wisdom and knowledge to the ignorant. Such are the effects of charity when it comes into the soul of the faithful, through the Holy Spirit, which is given to us from heaven.

Its flight is bold and daring, for it rises above the Cherubim and Seraphim, and all the angelic choirs.

It comprehends both the means and the extremes; forming but one and the same whole of things most opposite.

It infuses joy into the heart of all men—of one and all—not that joy which has its foundation in personal complacency, but that which maketh glad the heart, whose every affection is for God.

Charity pervades both heaven and earth, sea and land;—all that the eye or ear can comprehend of the wonders of creation, it makes use of to the praise and glory of the Creator.

There is no living thing, however small or contemptible, which, by the perfection of its being, reveals not the hand of its Sovereign Maker, the wisdom of the Disposer, and the providence of Him who rules and governs all supremely well: and this thought leads the devout soul to praise God, to bless and celebrate his praises, at all times and in every place.

As wax melts before the fire, so by charity the soul is kindled inwardly: it ceases to be chained to earth; wings are given to it, and it rises above the stars of heaven, to seek the only object of its love,—God, the creator and preserver of all things, in whom it can rejoice in exhaustless happiness, and repose in absolute security.

2. Oh, what sweetness and happiness does he taste, who is joined with God, and inwardly rejoices in Him!

Oh! how happy should we be, if we could taste but a little of that eternal blessedness, which appears unclouded to the angels for ever.

But we are recalled to an active life, and are obliged, with courage and the arms of charity, to fight against the temptations which daily assault us.

For we often pass from joy to affliction, from consolation to sadness, from laughter to weeping, from peace and repose, to inward war and trouble of soul.

Great consolations are often succeeded by profound desolation, or by an importunate temptation, or a corporal infirmity, or some human contrariety: or the loss of friends, or the triumph of our enemies, or trouble of soul; or the railleries of the younger, the censure of the old, or the severe reproof of our superior.

But these things are sent to humble the pride of our hearts; or to make us shew compassion to the weak, or to such as are in temptation or affliction.

Let us not then trust in ourselves, nor be over wise, nor look to our own advantage; but let us be humble to all, being subject to God, and to every creature for God's sake. (1 Pet. 2:13) Such is true charity.

By charity God came down into the world: by it were the gates of heaven re-opened to man.

By charity, Christ came down to save sinners. By charity and the ignominy of the cross, he ascended to the right-hand of his Father, and thus assured to man the highest of honours.

3. Charity is never idle; it is busied with things the highest and the most exalted: it comes down graciously and willingly to the humble and lowly.

It labours with diligence in honourable callings, and it delights in the meanest employment that obedience imposes.

It shows no repugnance to cleanse the wounds of the sick, to wash their feet, to make their beds, to clean their clothes, or sweep up their filth.

It suffers in patience, and rejoices in the midst of reproach and evil speaking.

4. As fire burns faggots, so the fire of charity consumes the fuel of vice. It purifies the heart by contrition, washes it by confession, cleanses it by prayer, enlightens it by holy reading, inflames it by devout meditation, fosters it by holy retirement, and unites it to God, by the fervour of its love.

Charity excites the mouth of man to sing the praises of God, his hands to labour for Him, his feet to walk, his eyes to contemplate his beauty, his memory to recal his benefits, all his body to minister to him, and all his faculties to love God above all that is in heaven or on earth.

Charity, when joined with humility, repairs the past ravages of sin, fences it against future dangers, gives it discernment of things present; delivers it from many doubts, sets a guard against curiosity, retrenches all superfluities, casts aside all vain things, discovers such as are false, inspires horror of such as are shameful; softens what is hard, gives understanding of things obscure, reveals in prayer the secrets of heaven, and, in a word, governs all, within and without.

In a holy soul, charity ceases not to work for God, although the weakness of human nature, and imperious circumstances, permit it not always to realize the designs of its heart.

5. How happy is the pure soul, to whom God is all, who feels no pleasantness nor worth out of God, and who sees nothing that deserves its affection—yea, rather, all bitter and burthensome. God loves it, because for His love it has renounced all, even its own affections, and fights boldly to preserve its purity.

Free from all earthly affection, the pure soul rises to God, and springs above created worlds, where it can find no worth or honour fit for its desires.

Charity breaks all bonds that chain it to the world: makes light its heavy burthens, and hastens to fulfil with faithfulness whatever is pleasing to God.

Its prayer is that of Christ. It says with him: “Father, not my will, but thine be done in every place, and for ever and ever, Amen.” (Matt. 25)

CHAP. XIV

On watching and striving against temptations

“Resistita diabolo, et fugiet a vobis.” (St. James 4:7.)

“Resist the devil, and he will fly from you.”

Wherever the just unites his soul to God, by prayer and meditation, by study and manual labour; there are on one side holy angels who rejoice with him, and on the other, evil spirits who send distractions and temptations.

When you begin to pray, the devils take to flight, as from the fire of the Holy Spirit; but when you laugh and make merry talk, they return fast and quickly, blow the fire of your distraction, and make it flame more brightly.

A good and watchful superior, will reprove those who, by indulging in idle talk, waste the precious hours, and neglect good works.

Dwell in silence, and let God be in all your thoughts, and all your consolation, and you will find no more that disrelish for good works, which hinders you from pursuing with ardour your holy enterprize.

2. Be faithful in little things, and your talent shall be vastly increased in the kingdom of heaven.

Be neither idle in solitude, nor a babbler in public, and the evil one, overcome by your diligence and silence, shall depart from you; for he loves not a man who works and is silent, who loves prayer and meditation.

Wherever you may be, alone, or in company of your brethren, it is indispensable for you to fight, to watch, and to pray, to overcome the temptations of the flesh and the spirit.

Fight valiantly, pray with fervour, do your work with diligence, study often, love silence, suffer patiently, and put all your trust in God, how great soever the tribulations or desolation be, that may be sent to try you.

He that learns in every place, and at all times, to practise patience, shall overcome his enemies, and enjoy in this world a peace which knows no

change, and in the world to come, a fairer crown of joy with the elect.

CHAP. XV

On bearing one another's burthens

“Alter alterius onera portate.” (Sti Pauli ad Gal. 6:2.)

“Bear ye one another's burdens.”

As we all are but one body in Christ, so we ought to be knit in the bonds of brotherly charity and peace, and to consent together in the pursuit of virtue.

We are all members of Christ, regenerated in baptism, by the grace of the Holy Spirit; redeemed by the passion of Christ; purified by the blood of Christ; fed by the body of Christ; instructed by the words of Christ; confirmed by the miracles of Christ; and led to virtue by the example of Christ; why then would you seek to hurt one another?

My brethren, he that offers an affront to his brother, be it in word or deed, offers an affront to Christ; and He shall himself avenge and punish it, if the wrong he has done be not speedily repaired.

We all have God for our Father in heaven; we are consequently all brethren in Christ; whatever be the country or state which gave us birth; and whether we be of low or noble blood.

One God hath made us all; it is the same God who preserves and governs us; it is the same God who calls us, who daily calls us still, by his word from without, by contrition from within, to the same beatitude. It is the same God, who promises to manifest himself eternally to us, in the presence of his angels, and to be our eternal recompense, in the unanimous blessedness of all the inhabitants of the heavenly kingdom.

Since we are all the servants of the same God, redeemed by the same price, sanctified by the same spirit, let it be our constant endeavour to love and serve one another.

If we would be pleasing to Christ, “let us bear one another’s burthens,” for Christ’s love; and let us pray one for another in charily, for God is equally in each of us, and each of us in Him.

Whatever imperfection or folly we observe in our brethren, we ought piously to excuse them, as we would that they would excuse us.

2. Beloved brother, bear with others, and they will bear with you; excuse, and you will be excused; pity the weaknesses of the sinner, and you will be pitied; comfort the afflicted, and you shall be comforted; raise up him that falls, and you shall be yourself raised up by the help of God.

Verily just is the retribution of Divine justice, which says, “do unto others as you would they should do unto you.”

Be not astonished, nor indignant, if man, who is frail, fall in this world; angels fell in heaven; and Adam, in the earthly paradise, did not resist the attraction of a pitiful apple.

A very little thing often tempts a man violently: and a trifle that hardly deserves notice, often grievously affects him. God justly permits this to be so, to teach us that if we do not resist small trials, we cannot overcome great ones.

3. Be full of indulgence and kindness to your brother when he is tempted; and pray for him when he is in tribulation.

The good which happens to you, becomes mine, when I rejoice with you for it, and your misfortunes are mine, when I pity those in them; for all men are frail, and therefore it is the duty of all charitably to pray one for another.

We must not upbraid others with defects, and despise them for such, when we overlook the like in ourselves; for it would be as a blind man mocking the blind, or the deaf him that cannot hear, or a fool that laughs at a fool.

Never speak to the disadvantage of one over whose conduct you have no charge; look rather to yourself, and repair the evil you find there.

If your intention be good, and you really mean to correct the faults of your brother, begin by correcting your own; you may then proceed to the reformation of his, not with ill-nature and caprice, but with prudence and modesty.

If you love me sincerely, and with a brother’s affection, be as indulgent to me as you are to yourself, and pray for me.

He that would correct his brother, and thinks that he is dispensed with from praying for him, and from having compassion for his infirmities, is not a sensible physician, but a cruel enemy and a burthensome railer.

He that prays for others, as well as for himself, does two good actions.

The more the sentiments of brotherly charity you carry in your heart be true, and the more willingly you pray for your brother, asking God to grant him grace to amend, and to cease to be a scandal to the weak; the deeper will your sorrow be, if he refuse to listen to you, or if he take your warnings ill.

For each one is to his brother, either a rose which gives out a sweet perfume, or a thorn which pricks.

CHAP. XVI

Of the love of Christ, and of hatred of the world

“Mane in dilectione meâ.” (St. John 15:9.)

“Abide in my love.”

It is sweet to hear, and salutary to obey the voice of Christ.

The love of Christ is pleasantness of spirit, and the soul’s paradise; it shuts out the world, and overcomes the evil one; it closes the mouth of hell, and opens wide the gates of heaven.

The love of Christ, and the love of the world, are contrary the one to the other, and have nothing in common; nor can they dwell together in the same heart.

The love of Christ, like the chariot of Elias, carries up the soul to heaven; but the love of the world is the conveyance of Satan, that drags it down to hell; its love leaves a festering wound, but the forgetting of the world, leads to the discovery of heaven.

The flattering words of a false friend, are more hurtful than the harsh reproof of the just.

The imagination of the deceitful invents falsehood, but the spirit of the just man drinks truth at the fountain.

He that scandalizes his brother, shall himself be scandalized.

God, who knoweth and ruleth over all, suffereth not his poor sheep to wander long, or to fill the air with empty bleatings; but either by the staff of fear, leads back the strayed one to the fold, or looking down on it with the eyes of love, sweetly guides it home by the interior voice of conscience.

2. Where peace and concord dwell together, God is there, and with Him all good.

Where strife and dissension dwell together, the devil is there, and with him all evil.

“Where pride is, there also shall be reproach; but where humility is, there also is wisdom.” (Prov. 11:2.)

Trample pride under foot, and you shall find much peace.

Where wrangling words are heard, the bowels of charity are wounded.

Where solitude and silence reign, there dwells the repose of the monk.

As in the conventual life, where labour is loved, and the rule observed with strictness, religious souls make fast progress in virtue; so where laughter and dissipation meet, the sweets of devotion take wings and fly away; for the idler and the babbler are seldom contrite, and rarely free from sin.

Where obedience is ready, the conscience is joyful: but where frivolous conversation is prolonged, work is neglected.

Where there are private gains, there is a defect of charity; but where the doctrine of Christ flourishes, the path of salvation is made secure.

Where brethren dwell together in unity, there chords the most harmonious rise to heaven.

Where moderation reigns, the virtue of concord shall last the longer.

Where those who offend are reprov'd with prudence and moderation, no one has a right to complain, or to accuse his superior; on this some one hath said, “In all things be moderate, for moderation is a most comely virtue.”

Where patience dwells, a great enemy is overcome; but where impatience enters, peace soon takes its leave.

Put a guard on the entrance of your mouth, and weigh well your words before you give them utterance.

Where faith and truth meet together, peace dwells secure; but with fraud and iniquity, foolish imaginings and blind prudence, alone, shall be thy guests.

Where charity is, there is the Holy Spirit.

Where the disposition is mistrustful, there will be no lack of fuel for anger and strife; but where there is the knowledge of the truth, there will be joy to those who are right of heart.

Under a feigned tongue often skulks a false friend, but humble confession obtains a ready pardon.

When the wisdom of man can do nothing, it is then that we must implore with more earnestness the divine protection.

He that makes choice of the way of malice and injustice, shall come to an evil end; but peace shall light abundantly on him who follows the footsteps of virtue, and who strives to be patient.

Woe to the impious man who does evil; woe to the hypocrite who seems to do good; and none suffer more than themselves from their iniquity.

“A double-minded man is inconstant in all his ways,” (St. James 1:8), and very wicked; but blessed is the simple and the just, in whom there is no guile: for God is with him to assist him in all his works, and to guide his feet into the right path.

When a man has once been faithless to his word, who shall lightly trust him? but he that renounces his first vow for a better, breaks not the word of truth.

3. It is pleasant to listen to the recital of acts of virtue, but it is more praiseworthy to practise them.

The best examination of conscience is that which leads to a change of life; and the fruits of a good examination are, abstaining from sin, and advancement in virtue.

The worthy fruits of devout prayer, is the union of the heart with God, in the fervour of the Holy Spirit, and he prays devoutly who drives away all frivolous thoughts.

He that places before him the image of the crucifix, shall drive away the illusions of the devil, and that soul has a seemly employment, which thinks continually of the passion of Christ.

He that meditates daily on the sacred wounds of Jesus, pours a healing and a cleansing balm on the wounds of his soul.

He that utterly despises the goods of this world, and thirsts not after its honours, shall obtain purity of heart, and give himself up without hindrance to the service of God.

He that would give perfect praise and honour to God, let him practise profound humility of heart, and meditate, groan, and weep over all his defects.

The sincere and humble contrition of a sinner is as a strong voice which penetrates to the ear of God.

4. Whatever good you do, do all to the glory of God.

He tramples under foot, and wounds to death, all pride, envy, and vain glory, who refers simply and wholly to the honour and glory of God, all the virtues which he practices, and all the good works he does, attributing nothing to his own merits, nor to his own strength, but stripping himself of all, acknowledges God as the first author of all that is good in him: for you renounce eternal honour and glory, when you take complaisancy in yourself, and not in God alone, who is the sovereign good.

And thus it was that the blessed Virgin Mary, when she sought to express the delight of her heart, for the inestimable benefits she had received from her Creator, exclaimed in her sublime Canticle: “My spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.” (St. Luc. 1:47.)

“If any man think himself to be something, whereas he is nothing, he deceives himself,” saith St. Paul the Apostle, (Gal. 6:3), who, even though rapt to the third heaven, gloried in nothing of himself, but refers to God alone all the good that he did whether by his preaching or his writings: “by the grace of God,” he saith, “I am what I am.” (1 Cor. 15:10.)

CHAP. XVII

On the imitation of the most holy life of our Lord Jesus Christ

“Quamdiu fecistis uni ex his fratribus meis minimis, mihi fecistis.” (St. Matth. 25:40.)

“As long as you did it to one of these, my least brethren, you did it to me.”

Note these words, weigh well the mysteries they contain, and let them be unto you as a rule of life.

He that comforts his brother in need, stretches out his hand to Jesus.

He that bears with patience the burthen which Providence has laid on him, carries on his shoulders Jesus, and him crucified.

He that addresses words of consolation to the afflicted, gives to Jesus a loving kiss.

He that mourns over the faults of his brother, and supplicates for his pardon, washes and wipes the feet of Jesus.

He that turns the anger of his brother to peace, prepares in his soul a bed of flowers for Jesus. (Cant. Lectula respersa floribus.)

He that at table gives up to his brother the better portion set aside for him, feeds Jesus with the bread and honey of charity.

He that meditates with fervour on God, introduces Jesus into the secret chamber of his soul.

He that reads words of holy wisdom to his brother, offers choice wine to the lips of Jesus.

He that restrains frivolous conversation, drives away the flies from the table of Jesus.

He that will not hearken to detraction, and reproveth unseemly conversation, arms himself with a staff to drive away a savage hound from the house of Jesus.

He that during refectory reads to his brethren correctly and distinctly, serves up a heavenly cup to the guests of Jesus, and inebriates them with the wine of joy; but he that reads ill, takes away the relish of the food; and he that stammers stains the cloth which covers the table of Jesus.

He that hears his neighbour slandered, and feels therefrom much grief and deep sorrow, anoints with balm the sacred wounds of Jesus.

He that speaks of the good example and virtues of his neighbour, presents to Jesus a nosegay of fair flowers.

He that reads devoutly, and announces the words of Jesus, casts sweet perfume in the nostrils of those that hear him.

He that bears charitably with the faults of his neighbour, and gives them a favourable construction, shall readily obtain mercy from Jesus.

He that throws a veil over the vices or scandals of his neighbour, covers the naked limbs of Jesus.

He that meditates on the humble life and miracles of Jesus, and therewith sweetly nourishes his soul, drinks in milk and honey from the mouth of Jesus.

Thus spoke the blessed Agnes, who after experiencing it, had the happiness of shedding her blood for the love of Jesus.

He that reads or sings in the place of his sick brother, sweetly plays on the harp with the angels before the cradle of Jesus.

He that prays devoutly, abstains from delicate meats, and renounces all, comes with the Magi kings to lay three costly offerings in the hands of the infant Jesus.

He that washes the feet of his brethren, and does the meanest offices; with St. John the Baptist, baptises Jesus.

He that lives in the solitude and silence of his cell, enters the desert with Jesus.

He that does violence to his inclinations, and chastises his body, fasts with Jesus.

He that speaks words of salvation to his brethren, preaches with Jesus of the kingdom of heaven.

He that prays constantly for such of his brethren as are weak or in temptation, visits Lazarus with Jesus, and weeps with Martha and Mary at his tomb.

3. He that offers the holy sacrifice of the mass, for the faithful departed, or recites the office for them, comes with Jesus to the tomb of Lazarus, to beg that his soul may be mercifully delivered from suffering.

He that goes to the common refectory with his brethren, to hear spiritual reading, eateth and drinketh with Jesus and his disciples.

He that lays up in his heart the words of God, which he has heard in the refectory, reposes with the Apostle St. John, during the supper, on the breast of Jesus.

He that submits humbly, and without delay, to do what is painful to him, follows Jesus with his disciples to the Mount of Olivet, where he was betrayed and delivered to his enemies.

He that has instant recourse to fervent prayer in tribulation or temptation, contends with Jesus in his agony, against the assaults of Satan.

He that renounces his own will entirely, fulfils the will of God the Father, with Jesus, and with courageous resignation carries his cross even to Calvary.

He that prays for his enemies, and willingly pardons those that have sinned against him, prays with Jesus that his enemies may not perish, but rather that they may be converted to God and live.

He that voluntarily renounces the things of this world, and casts aside the flattery of the senses, expires with Jesus on the cross; and his spirit, like that of the Apostle St. Paul, is rapt even to Paradise.

4. He that keeps his heart clean and peaceful, wraps up Jesus in fair white linen, and entombs him in his breast.

He that perseveres unto the end in the service of Jesus, sweetly reposes with him in peaceful slumber in the sepulchre.

He that weeps for the sorrows of the blessed Virgin Mary, deserves that she and her holy Son should console him in affliction.

He that in spirit recalls the words and actions of Jesus, and makes thereof a spiritual food, prepares sweet spikenard to soften the bitterness of his passion.

He that gives humble and devout thanks for the blessings he has received, comes with Mary Magdalen, bringing sweet perfume to the sepulchre of

Jesus.

He that after contrition and confession of sins, firmly resolves to amend them, rises with Jesus from the death of sin.

He that casts aside his lukewarmness, and returns again to his first fervour, celebrates in spirit a new pasch, and sings with Him an hallelujah of joy.

He that despises the pleasures of the world, flies from its dangers, loves a religious life, and accepts its obligations, enters with Jesus into “the upper chamber,” there to serve God in freedom and in secret, there to lead a life more pure, and to receive more abundantly the graces of the Holy Spirit.

He that is cold on earthly things, and is enflamed through holy meditation with such as are heavenly, leaves the earth with Jesus, and enters with Him into heaven.

Blessed is the soul in which “to live is Christ, and to die is gain,” (Phil. 1:21,) for he that would live to Christ, must die to himself: and he that would be wise and happy in Christ, must renounce all perishable things.

Total separation from the things of this world, is painful, and death is grievous: but to reign in joy with Christ, is salvation and life eternal.

Oh! when shall the moment come when God shall be my all? when I shall be all for Him! when I shall be united to Him!

For ah! the faithful soul cannot be fully blessed, till it be united to God in glory.

Follow, then, Jesus in the steps of love, filled with a lively faith and a burning charity, that you may be worthy to see him face to face, there, where he is himself, the blessing and the joy of the angels.

To which beatific vision may Jesus Christ our Lord lead us: He who, for us, endured the bitter cross. Amen.

CHAP. XVIII

Of the eternal praise of God

“Semper laus ejus in ore meo.” (Ps. 33:1.)

“His praise shall be always in my mouth.”

How sweet in ears devout those accents fall,
But, oh! how sweeter far ’twere face to face,
In God’s own presence to repeat his praise,
And sing the words, by holy angels sung!

Ah! should all music lend its best, combined,
To sing of else than God, how stale should fall
The sweet concerted beauty on the ear,
And bring no joy to souls devout, or fill
The heart’s warm vows with satisfied content!

Like blessed Mary then, with pure intent,
If you, like her, rejoicing would exult,
Come not to satisfy the corporal ear,
Sing unto God, but sing to praise his might,
If you would offer unto him, like her,
Service acceptable, and pleasing praise.
With heart and tongue united, celebrate
In concert loud with all created things,
His goodness infinite, and boundless might;
’Till the vast harmony of grateful praise,
One multitudinous hymn, fill earth and heaven,
All earth with joy, with love increased all heaven!

Oh! how our hearts should haste to sing his praise,
To love our God, at whose all-mighty word,

The heavens and earth came forth!—to honour Him,
Who gave the gift of everlasting life,—
Him, whom the angels that surround his throne,
In ceaseless hymns of gladness, laud and bless;
Who never tire of singing forth his praise,
Nor sing his worth, without increase of fruit.

There sing his holy saints, when from the bonds
Of fleshly continent loosed; from Satan's snares
Escaped, and from temptation's press secure,
To God, their God united, hymn his praise,
And lost in beatific love, enjoy
A happiness that knows no change nor end.
There having reached the haven of all rest,
With satisfaction sweet, they recollect
The bitter tribulations they have passed,
The numberless dangers which around them hung,
That miserable life, and all its lures,
From all of which now happily removed.
Their groanings now give place to songs of joy,
And their afflictions, once so burthensome,
Shine now the fairest jewels in their crown.

And oh! what words can tell their happiness,
There in a place where sin comes not, where none
Within that mount may hurt, and none disturb,
Where every breath breathes joy, and where the ear
Hears but the sweet concert of songs divine.

Bless thou then also, faithful soul, thy God;
Pour blessings forth upon the God of Heaven;
While yet contained within the bonds of flesh,
Thy loving Saviour, sing and celebrate!—
On Jesus call—beseech with earnest voice,
And warm entreaty, Him—and He shall come
With bands of holy angels to thy aid,
And from the perilous strife, thou shalt arise
More pure, thy wily enemies repulsed.

Put on the shield of prayer, lest while ye turn,
The evil one prevail against thee sleeping;
Lest the voluptuous lurements of the flesh
Deceive thy confidence, and make thee fear
The over-strictness of a holy state,
And hardship of a life of diligence;
Lest while the sun of prayer cease to shine,
Thy zeal be chilled by the long wintry night.

Oh! by the love that Jesus bore ye, help
To bear the burthen of his sacred cross,
And it shall ope for you the gates of heaven,
What need you more?—renounce your headstrong will,
Bear with your brother's weaknesses, and learn
To mortify your flesh,—such is the road,
The royal road that leads the soul to heaven,
Where you assuredly shall find repose,
And for the light afflictions of a day,
Receive assured and everlasting rest;
For dark humiliation, high respect,
And loud-tongued honours, for thy life obscure!

Oh! may thy lips declare the praise of God,
Whatever be thy lot—for good or ill;
For in the train of seeming evil, borne
With meek submission to the will of God,
Haply reward of fuller joy shall come;
Then be thy pains or sorrows what they may,
With tender gratitude embrace the rod,
That from a loving Father comes, who tends
With equal care the mighty and the mean,
Since all to God's own image once were framed,
All share his watchful eye and plastic hand.

Then raise thy voice on high, to sing his praise,
Whose providence ordaineth all, whose eye
Can pierce the heavens, and penetrate the earth,
And fathom ocean's vast abyss profound.

Praise Him who gave to thee a reasoning soul,
When well He might have left thy life to die,
Lost in material death.—Still praise were due.
Hadst thou but had the boon of passing life;
Then praise Him for thy higher gift, and bow,
In humble meekness to His sovereign will.

The lion's gift is strength—but not to boast,
Since the small insect on his tiny wings,
Can soar above the mighty forest's king.—
Come then submissive in his several state,
Come rich and poor, the mighty and the mean,
Simple or wise, baronial or serf,
With equal gratitude unite to praise
The Lord of All, the common Lord of All,
Who to his creatures gives his several gifts,—
Beauty of wond'rous form, and varied shape,
Wide spread, and marvellous, wherein shines forth,
The wisdom of his vast creative power,
The glory and the honour of His name.

Then, faithful soul, your high Redeemer praise,
Who by his passion, and adorable Cross,
Has freed you from eternal death!—Alas!
How could you shew your weight of gratitude,
Were you to die for him a thousand times,
Each trebly welted on the bitter cross.

Praise then to Him, your guide, protector, friend,
Who from so thick-strewn perils, guards, preserves,
And keeps you from the depths unknown of sin.
Praise Him whose gifts profuse, his lavish hand,
Pours forth innumerable in daily shower,
Fresh every morning, every night renewed;
Praise Him who more than all exalted gifts,
Vouchsafes his gift of gifts, most perfect, precious,
That gift of gifts when He, himself, descends
To rest upon our altars—heavenly sweet!

Who feeds thee with Himself, yet asks from Thee,
No token but thy heart, and love sincere,
No other offering, but notes of praise!

Then in that awful hour when He descends,
The while thy heart is spread with heavenly joy,
When purest, praise and thank his holy name,
Whose loving mercy comes to succour thee,
Lest in the way thy weary steps should fail,
And resolution unsustained by Him,
Desert thee e'er ye reach the final goal!—
Hence is his arm beneficent extended,
Hence does he feed thee with the bread of heaven,
That hence repaired, and strengthened, lesser aids,
Reading devout, or meditation deep,
Or on the incarnate mystery, or those
Sad sorrows of his passion, may sustain,
And be the daily, nightly, hourly food,
Whereon thy soul may draw new fire of love.

Then whatsoever be thy trials here,
Be thanks and praise thy grateful task in all;
Whether afflictions press thy soul within,
Or corporal ailments be thy outward lot,
These sent by Him, are sent in gracious love,
To drive away the assaults of swelling pride,
And guard thee from presumption's fatal snare;
Remembering still that bodily suffering,
Oft to compunction leads the humbled soul.

Yet, if the gift of health and strength be thine,
Praise Him who gives thee such, that you may work
With ardour for your own and neighbour's good,
And shun the silken ease of idleness.

Praise Him in all,—in recreation's hour,
When ye for needful health, go forth to seek
Refreshment in the garden's tempered air,
Praise Him who spreads the blossoms to the sun,

The scented lily, and the roses sweet,
The bowering trees and flowers that fill the air
With sweetest perfume, verdure, goodly shade.
Raise up your hearts to God in tuneful praise,
For all the marvellous beauties, that fair earth,
By order of His teeming wisdom sent,
In various seasons, in her lap brings forth,
Who in fair course supplies the wants of men,
And pours forth proofs of His exhaustless bounty!

Then be His praise forever in thy mouth,
Praise Him whose majesty fulfils the earth,
Whose glory is above the heaven of heavens.
With all his saints in heaven praise Him, whose praise
Is all the angels celebrate in heaven.
Be as the highest intellects and powers,
To hymn His praise—lest thine ingratitude
Place thee beneath the brutes irrational.
The little birds sing sweetly forth His praise,
The lowing cattle on a thousand hills,
The bleating sheep, and all that earth, sea, air,
Fulfil with teeming life,—the very winds
And unchained elements—His word obey,
And all th' inanimate universe declares
The wondrous might and glory of their God.

Then let His holy presence guide thy soul:
In thought, word, deed, look up to God in fear,
Lest you offend against the all-seeing God,
Thank Him for all the gifts you have received,
And with a heart transpierced with gratitude
And love, exclaim, Praise be to thee, O God,
For ever blessed be thy holy name,
And every spirit praise the Lord.

Amen!

THE VALLEY OF LILIES

THE PROLOGUE TO THIS LITTLE BOOK

“Justus germinabit sicut lilium, et florebit in æternum ante Dominum.”
(Osee 14:6.)

“The just shall spring as the lily, and his root shall spread forth before the Lord for ever.”

THIS little book may be called the Valley of Lilies, to distinguish it from that which precedes it, under the title of the Little Garden of Roses; for as that treats of many virtues which spring forth as fair roses in the garden of Jesus, so this discourses of many other virtues, which, as so many lilies of exceeding whiteness, are planted by our Lord Jesus in the valley of humility, where they are bedewed and made fertile by the inward infusion of the Holy Spirit. For, according to the testimony of St. Gregory, to seek to acquire virtue, and not to be humble, is to carry dust against the wind.

It is of these lilies that the spouse of Christ, out of the humility and devotion of her soul, speaketh, in the Canticle of Canticles, when wishing to declare the inward consolations she experienced from the visit of the divine Spouse, and the graces he had heaped upon her, she says: “I to my beloved, and my beloved to me, who feedeth among the lilies.” (6:6.) And again: “My beloved is white and ruddy.” (5:10.) “So shall he repose upon my bosom.”

To him be praise, honour, and glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

CHAP. I

On the three-fold state of human life

“Ego flos campi, et lilium convallium.” (Cant. Cantic. 1:1.)

“I am the flower of the field, and the lily of the valleys.”

THIS is the voice of Christ, to his holy Church in general, and to every devout soul individually; for Christ is the sovereign Spouse of the Church, and the head of all the faithful. He is the flower of all virtues, the lily of the valleys, the lover of humility and chastity.

If you would serve Christ, and please the Heavenly Spouse, overcome your passions, gather the lilies of virtue, eschew idleness, study diligently, write books, work at some useful manual labour, pray often, turn away from the turmoil of the world, love retirement, and avoid all idle or hurtful conversation.

2. If virtue be not in your heart, how seemly soever your outward habit be, it is worth nothing in the sight of God. The vessel may be of outward fair proportions but it is empty.

Even as a vessel filled with good wine exhales a pleasing odour, so from the good heart of a religious man, whose affections are pure, spring forth holy words and works, which contribute to the glory of God, and the profit of his neighbour.

Weigh well then, my brother, the greatness of the state you are engaged in, the outward marks of which you bear before the eyes of men, that so you may study both to please God worthily, and to edify your fellow-men by your life and conversation: ever remembering that whether you do good or evil, both are done in the sight of God.

When you eat or drink, when you sleep or take repose, when you follow the bent of your desires, you do the works of the flesh, and your conduct is like that of the beasts of the earth; who wander about, who eat, drink, and

fill their belly, till they be satisfied; who butt with their horns, who tear with their claws or teeth, who scowl with threatening looks on those who resist them, and fill the air with hideous cries,—such are carnal men—such the glutton—the miser—the proud—the passionate and the brawler—for the spirit of God is not in them, and they are subject to their passions only.

3. But when you watch or pray, when you read or sing psalms and hymns to the glory of God and his saints, when you fast, and abstain from vice, when you make yourself useful to your neighbour, when you mourn and weep over your own disorders, or when you confess them, and supplicate pardon of God; then you do the works of the Holy Spirit, you follow his inspirations, and fulfil the duties of a religious life. Such conduct is like that of the angels in heaven, who ever sing to the praise and glory of God, from whose face they never turn away.

But when you give way to sentiments of anger; when you nourish pride; when you give loose to detraction and murmuring; when you commit fraud or practise lying; when you disturb others or rejoice over the evil that has happened to your neighbour; when his prosperity afflicts you, when you despise him in your heart, or when you labour diligently for your own interest only; then you follow the inspirations of the devil, and your conduct, full of malice and teeming with disorder, resembles his: for that spirit of iniquity owns no counsellor but his passions,—no motive but his perverseness. He does all the evil he can, or dare; and because there is no good in him, he strives hard to seduce and pervert the sons of men; to make them cleave to sin and batten there.

The life of the just is like that of the angels, and the life of the carnal man like that of the beasts; but the life of the proud is like that of devils.

Servants of God, take heed, lest you fall into the snares which the spirits of malice lay for you; for you will be betrayed by them, at the awful tribunal of God, and you shall be there confounded.

CHAP. II

Of the praise of God, in the poverty of devotion

“Pauper et inops laudabunt nomen tuum, Domine.” (Ps. 73:21.)

“The poor and needy shall praise thy name.”

If in prayer or holy meditation, you should fall into a state of dryness, or coldness, or sadness, be sure you give not way to despair, or cease to call humbly on the name of Jesus.

But in poverty of spirit, persevere in giving praise and thanksgiving to God; and take comfort when you use these words: “The poor and needy shall praise thy name, O Lord!”

For many holy and devout souls have been proved by dryness, and seemed for a long while as if it were abandoned by God, that they might thereby learn patience and compassion for others, by the sense of their own sorrow and need, and not to presume too much on themselves in the moment of fervour, and in the season of spiritual jubilation.

Say with the Psalmist, “I am needy and poor.” (Ps. 69:6.) In the Lord I will put my trust, for he is my strength and my salvation, and all good comes from God.

3. Restrain thyself then from presumption when gladness is vouchsafed you, and beware of discouragement when the clouds of sorrow gather round you: receive each of these as it shall please God to send them, and be in all content; for you have nothing of thyself, but all from God.

When the grace of devotion is granted to you, the sun of Justice shines on thee from the heights of heaven; your soul walks in his brightness and rejoices in its riches. But you will be indeed wretched, if you permit yourself to be deceived by any feeling of vanity or presumption.

When the grace of devotion is withdrawn from you, on account perhaps of the abuse you have made of it, your soul becomes really poor and weak, capable of but very little, and with no relish for prayer; but receive these privations with gratitude, for in despoiling of these gifts, and humbling you, God giveth you a new proof of his love. His hand strikes you with the rod, with which he corrects his children, for the hidden excesses of which you are daily guilty, in order to inspire you with a contempt for yourself, and to hinder you from having so high an estimate of your own merit; as St. Paul says, “Be not high-minded, but fear.” (Rom. 11:20.)

The soul is a great gainer when it is deeply penetrated with a sense of self-contempt, and gives to God all the glory of the good it may have done.

CHAP. III

On the proving of the devout by contraries

“Exultate justi, in Domino.” (Ps. 32:1.)

“Rejoice in the Lord, O ye just.”

Joy is eternal in heaven; sorrow is eternal in hell; but both dwell occasionally on earth, to prove the good and the bad.

The sky is pure and serene in summer, dark and cloudy in winter; so the devout soul has its summer and winter.

When the grace of God comes and illuminates it, it discovers many truths which were before unknown, and understands what before it understood not. It rejoices with great joy, and expresses in songs of gladness the happiness which it feels. But the season of trial comes at last, and the grace of devotion is withdrawn; then winter comes, in ice and cold, in the gloom of the intellect and fear of soul. Then patience, most needful to our wants as it is pleasing to God, comes to our aid; in such trials our advance in virtue grows apace, and our eternal recompense is increased.

2. The chastisements of God humble and purify the soul, confound our pride, and dissipate vain-glory.

So long as the soul is united to the body, so long is it subject in turns to both, that it may make more progress in the love of Christ.

Wherefore it is a proof of great knowledge and virtue to profit by adversity, as well as prosperity.

My soul, bless thou the Lord, at all times. Sing, O Sion, day and night, the praises of the Lord, and thy reward shall be great in the sight of God, in heaven and on earth; for all shall tend to thy spiritual advantage, whether prosperity or adversity, good or evil, joy or sorrow, as the apostle saith; “We know that to them that love God, all things work together unto good, to

such as are called to be saints, and to those that fear him.” (Rom. 8:28.) And blessed are they who in all things follow the will of God.

CHAP. IV

Of the true lover of God

“Diligite Dominum omnes sancti ejus pusilli et magni.” (Ps. 30:24.)

“O Love the Lord, all ye his saints.”

Love Him, rich and poor, love Him great and small; for it is He who made both poor and rich, both small and great.

He that would truly love God, must love Him purely, that is to say, must love God for God, and with none other wish but that of enjoying Him. Such love must have for its end neither temporal advantage nor profit, nor inward consolation—no—not even eternal recompense; but wholly and entirely for his infinite goodness and surpassing worth.

It is for this reason that the Psalmist, inviting us to sing the praises of God, says and repeats so often, “Give glory to the Lord, for he is good:” (Ps. 105)—words which are indeed sweet to such as love God;—but, for the consolation of the contrite and repentant mourner, he adds—“For his mercy endureth for ever.” (ibid.)

Ye weak and frail, taste ye the sweetness of these words—but whatever be your sins, despair not—“for his mercy endureth for ever.”

The deeper our humility, and the more fervent our love, the more pleasing shall we be to God.

Blessed is he that accounteth himself the vilest of creatures, and who shuns every thing that is contrary to the will of God.

Blessed is he who out of charity and with a pure intention does every action for God, and with a view to please him; and who proposes to himself no other end, than his honour, praise, and glory.

Blessed is he who attributes nothing that he possesses to his own merits, but freely returns to God all that he has received from him.

CHAP. V

On the gratitude of the soul, for every good

“Magnificate Dominum mecum, et exaltemus nomen ejus in idipsum.” (Ps. 33:4.)

“O magnify the Lord with me; and let us extol his name together.”

He that for the least favour, is most grateful to God, gives him worthy praise, and appreciates the goodness and bounty of Him, who above all is infinitely great; for no grace can he small or contemptible, that comes from the liberal hand of the Most High.

God seeks and asks for nothing, but that our love may be disinterested, and that by carefully avoiding all offence against him, we should give proofs to him of our sincere gratitude.

2. Great in the sight of God is he, who is filled with deep humility, and contempt for himself—who judges himself unworthy to partake in his gifts and benefits, and when he makes use of such as he has received, neither to satiate his vanity, nor to court the esteem of men.

But greater is he, who although like Job, afflicted, overwhelmed with contempt and injuries, despoiled of his goods, abandoned by his friends, tempted by the devil, covered with raillery and confusion,—yet rejoices in tribulation, giving thanks to God, and blessing his holy name; reckons as great gain to his soul, the evils and calamities, which weigh heavy upon him; and endures them all without one murmur, for the love of God.

3. Blessed is he, who after the example of Job, learns to acknowledge the hand which strikes him, and to submit with resignation to the rod of affliction, trusting wholly to the mercy of God, and bowing unreservedly to his holy will.

Blessed is he who ever seeks after, and prefers before all, the will of God, and who takes pleasure in being accounted vile in the eyes of man:—who

rejoices in the midst of insult and injury, and who receives temporal losses as ministering servants to the good of his soul.

CHAP. VI

On the conformity of the devout soul to the Cross

“Cum ipso sum in tribulatione.” (Ps. 90:15.)

“I am with him in tribulation.”

The Soul.—Lord, what mean those words that I hear? give to thy servant a right understanding; unfold to me all the consolation these words inclose.

The Lord.—Hearten unto me, my son.

When thy heart is fallen into tribulation or sorrow, then are you fastened with Jesus to his cross.

When consolations return to your soul, and fervour comes, and you are constrained to express your joy, by the singing of hymns and holy canticles, then are you raised again with Jesus, in newness of spirit; you rise again from the dead, singing alleluias of joy.

2. When on bended knees, with groans and tears, you implore the pardon of your sins; then you knock loudly at the gate of heaven.

When you turn away from the vanities of the world, and give yourself up entirely to the meditation of the good things of eternity; then you enter heaven with Jesus, to live there in the company of the angels.

Be then meek, humble, and resigned to the infirmities and reverses which may come upon you; bear patiently your cross with Jesus; die daily on the cross, for your eternal salvation; for every affliction of the flesh, when borne with patience, is a remedy for the evils of the soul, a satisfaction for sins, and the hope of future blessedness and glory. Amen.

CHAP. VII

On the walking of a pure soul with God

“Ambulate, dum lucem habetis.” (Sti. Johan. 12:35.)

“Walk whilst you have the light.”

1. He walketh with God, whilst there is light, who has no desire for what this world affords; and who fixes all his affections on God in heaven; for the hidden treasure of the faithful soul is Jesus Christ our Lord, in whom all goodness dwells.

However great the riches of him who has not God for his friend, he is always in indigence and want.

But he that would have God for his friend, must love Him, and keep his commandments.

2. You keep the commandments of God when you avoid all useless words; when you show by your works, an example of those virtues you recommend to their practice; when, instead of seeking your own glory, you refer all the glory, and the good you may do, or observe in others, purely and entirely to the glory of God.

But he that is satisfied with himself, pleases a fool, and displeases God.

Thus in all the good you say or do, seek only the glory of God, that you may receive from Him still greater favours.

Why should you glory in natural advantages, when you are mortal, and presently shall be the food of worms?

Young man, hear the voice of an ancient; separate yourself from all that might allure your soul to idleness, for you shall only find repose, when you descend into your heart, and dispose it to seek God before all things, and to love Him intimately.

CHAP. VIII

On the peace of heart, and rest in God

“In pace factus est locus ejus.” (Ps. 75:3.)

“His place is in peace.”

The Soul.—Lord, who is he that dwelleth in true peace?

The Lord.—He that is meek, and humble of heart. But why do you inquire into what passes in the soul of others, when you neglect so much what is passing in thine own?

Hearken then unto me; it is the heart the most humble, and the most willing to suffer for the sake of God, that enjoys the most abundant peace.

To such an one no burthen is heavy, for God himself is in his heart.

Blessed are they that converse with God in prayer, in meditation, by singing, by reading, and who keep silence on the vanities of the passing world.

Wherever you are, wheresoever you go, whithersoever you fly, your thoughts still accompany you; but the meditation on what is good, brings joy to the soul, while evil thoughts afflict it.

Anger brings forth trouble, and envy blinds the soul; but hatred kills it.

Devout reading instructs; prayer enflames it; but good works are the fulfilment of the law.

2. Holy words purify the heart; frivolous words defile it; idle words scandalize it; bitter words sadden it; words of mercy soothe disquietude; moral conversation edifies the heart; dogmatic (historialis) entertainments strengthen the faith, and heavenly words raise it up into heaven.

Cleanse your heart from all malice, if you would enjoy sweet peace.

There is no sweet peace but what comes from God; and he is the peace of the virtuous, who does all things well for the sake of God, whom he loves.

Abide in silence, and endure a little for the sake of God; and he himself will free you from every burthen, and from all disquietude.

A holy life and a pure conscience beget confidence in God in tribulation and death, but an evil conscience is always in fear, and tormented by remorse.

The angry man falls quickly from one evil into a worse; but the patient and the meek makes a friend of his enemy, and God will be propitious to him, for that he hath shewn mercy unto him who offended him.

CHAP. IX

Of recollection of heart with God

“Quis non colligit mecum, spargit.” (St. Matt. 12:30.)

“He who gathereth not with me, scattereth,” saith Jesus Christ our Lord.

When through the multiplied temptations of the evil one, the bitter passions of your heart, or the annoyances you may suffer from your fellow-men, you shall have fallen into lukewarmness and great dissipation, retire into solitude, and there prostrate and alone at the foot of the Holy Cross, before the image of the blessed Virgin Mary, or before any other picture which recalls either the honour of God, or the memory of his saints, use your endeavour to gather up your soul by reciting the Lord’s Prayer, or the Angelical Salutation.

Invoke especially Jesus and Mary, beseech the holy angels, and all the heavenly court, to obtain for you the return of the graces and consolations which you have been deprived of, and say with holy David, “Lord, all my desire is before thee, and my groaning is not hidden from thee.” (Ps. 37:10.) “Lord, from my youth I have put my hope in thee; I fly unto thee in my tribulation.”

2. A devout prayer.—Teach me, O Lord, to follow thy commandments, to do thy will, and to renounce my own, for this is well-pleasing to thee, and the safety of my soul demands it.

Lord, may I never think, nor desire, nor do any thing to displease thee, or to hurt my neighbour, and never to act contrary to what thou hast commanded, or to the example of thy devout servants.

If I transgress, correct me in thy mercy, and destroy me not in thy wrath.

For thou art my God, and I am thy servant—ever poor—ever weak, and ever most needy of thy grace and mercy in all things.

Blessed be thy holy name above all, now and for ever and ever. Amen.

CHAP. X

On watching and prayer against temptations

“Vigilate et orate ut non intretis in tentationem.” (St. Marci 14:38.)

“Watch and pray that you enter not into temptation,” either of the flesh, or the spirit, of the world or the devil.

The flesh leads to concupiscence, the spirit to pride, the world to vanity, the devil to envy.

But Christ hath told us, that to deserve heaven, and avoid the pains of hell, we must practise chastity, humility, charity, and contempt for the world.

To this end we must watch and pray, at all times and in every place, for no part is secure against the attacks of our malignant enemy, who sleeps not, nor rests from his temptations, “who continually goes about seeking whom he may devour,” (1 St. Pet. 5:8), whom he may cast into trouble and discouragement, and whom he may inspire with disgust for prayer or other spiritual exercises.

2. It is for this reason that our Lord Jesus Christ, who knew the malice of the evil one, and the efficacy of prayer; the strength of the enemy, and the weakness of man, admonishes, in the most earnest manner, his disciples, and all the faithful, to watch and pray, if we would not be overcome by our enemies,—that is our vices.

Watch ye then and pray, that ye enter not into the temptations of the devil, nor consent unto him.

If you are unable to recite the whole psalter, recite a psalm, a verse, a devout hymn in honour of Jesus, of Mary, or of some of the blessed saints, that you may raise up your soul to God, by the groanings of your heart or the holy words your mouth may utter.

For God is nigh unto them that call upon Him with humility; and “the prayer of him that humbleth himself shall pierce the clouds,” (Eccles. 35:21), fill the soul with trust in God, and thwart the schemes, the efforts, the threats, and the vanities of the devil.

3. If the presence of men keep you from prayer, “Enter,” according to the counsel of Jesus Christ, “into your chamber, and having shut the door, pray to thy Father in secret,” (St Matt. 6:6), who already knoweth the thoughts and desires of your heart, and what you have need of.

Say to Him, then, every time you address Him in prayer, “Father! thy will be ever done, and not mine; grant me nothing but what may be conformable to thy glory, and the good of my soul.”

When thou art in choir with thy brethren, read and sing with a recollection like that of the angels before the throne of God.

Sing in such a manner that thy heart may be inwardly penetrated with compunction, and that you may please men without displeasing God; for God prefers compunction of heart, to the loud or tuneful voice; and is appeased by humble prayer, but offended by vain-glory.

The groanings of a contrite heart draw down the graces of the Lord, and strengthen virtue; but the song of a wandering heart quenches devotion; and for all such faults and negligences we must give a strict account.

May the divine mercy keep us from all such offences, and lead us to the kingdom of heaven. Amen.

CHAP. XI

On the fear of eternal punishment, as a preservative against the vices of the flesh and pride of spirit

“Confige timore tuo carnes meas.” (Ps. 118:120.)

“Pierce thou my flesh with thy fear.”

Such a prayer is good to repress the evil inclinations of the flesh, and to bring down the pride of the spirit; for these two enemies fight against man, and vex him daily; sometimes it is the flesh, which torments him by its irregular appetites, and sometimes it is the spirit which seeks the praise of men, and applies its own good works to the satisfaction of its vanity.

Both of these enemies are great evils, and there is imminent peril in either.

When you are drawn to evil, by that miserable flesh, whose being is so frail, think of the torment of eternal fire. Quench the fire of concupiscence in the fire of hell, for it is happily ordered that impressions more feeble should disappear before those which are stronger, that the soul may be saved “so as by fire.” (1 Cor. 3:15.)

All carnal pleasure is of short duration; beauty of body, glory, honours, all the enjoyments of this world, are vain and deceitful.

Even as a violent headache forces complaints and groans, from one who has been thoughtless and wandering, so the fear of death, and the dread of the punishment of hell, give to the sinner power to resist temptation, and to overcome his vicious inclinations.

2. He that is without fear, shall quickly fall into evil, and he that refuses to humble himself, in the presence of God and his saints, shall be

confounded by devils in the day of judgment, and cruelly tormented by them for ever.

Listen to an irrevocable decree, applicable to every creature, to angels as well as to men: “God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.” (St. James 4:6.)

But the mercy of the Lord is with his saints and elect, from eternity unto eternity.

Tremble, then, ye proud, for the judgment of God in all your actions, and cease to glory in the vanity of your passing reputation.

When you have done all that you can, and all that you ought to have done, there yet remain many things, and scarcely could you restore one for a thousand.

Tremble then for the rod and staff of God’s vengeance—tremble for the judgment to come.

Every virtue shall be rewarded, but every bad action shall be punished.

If fire were to break out in your dwelling, would you not fear? would you not rise on the instant and fly? Such is the effect that ought to be produced in your soul by the fear, and dread and thoughts of the pains to come, which shall never end; and whoever entertains in his heart a lively horror of the punishments of hell, shall, by means of these thoughts, overcome lukewarmness, and rekindle his fervour.

CHAP. XII

On the memory of our Lord's passion; as a remedy against dissipation

“Beati qui lugent, quoniam ipsi consolabuntur.” (St. Matth. 5:3.)

“Blessed are those who weep, for they shall be comforted.”

By whom shall they be comforted? most surely by Christ—in the secret of the heart, and not by the world, which can offer but a vain and idle consolation.

Light and idle discourse, and frequent laughter, have no agreement with the passion and bitter sufferings of Christ.

If my head or my back were wounded, but by one of those sharp thorns which formed the crown of Jesus Christ, would I laugh and be merry? no, surely, but rather weep and cry aloud through very pain.

If my foot were pierced by one of the nails which fastened Jesus to the cross, would I have a fancy to go and run in the world? no, never; I would lay me down in sorrow, and learn, by the experience of pain, to mourn over the sufferings of my divine Saviour.

Happy should I be, if the abundance and bitterness of my tears could then efface my sins.

Oh! how holy is the grief we feel, when we weep over the sacred wounds of our Saviour Jesus Christ! and how sweet the tears we shed!

2. When you are in distress, when any temptation assails you, or when you feel your own weakness, arm yourself forthwith with the shield of prayer, and the standard of the Holy Cross; take refuge in the sacred wounds of Christ, and there in the fervour of prayer, and in serious meditation on his passion, find a salutary remedy for all the wants of your soul.

Consider well the high and heavy cross, on which Jesus Christ hung naked for the love of you, fastened with nails which tore his sacred hands.

Behold his crown, count there the numerous thorns, which pierced so sadly and so deep his sacred head, and dewed it with his sacred blood abundantly.

Place these, and all those instruments which were used in the passion of Jesus Christ, beside you, for your safeguard by day and night: lest your grievous enemy, finding your mind stripped of these sacred imaginings, enter in and pollute thy heart with vain thoughts and sordid picturings.

3. Let not your bed be laid in softness; in memory of the holy nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ, think of that poor and narrow crib, where Jesus was born, and where were heard his infant cries. He had no ornament for his cradle but a little straw, and no nourishment but a little milk from his Virgin Mother.

Let the hardness and poverty of your couch, recal in some sort the hard and stony sepulchre of our Lord Jesus Christ; where was laid the body of Jesus, crucified for you, truly dead and buried in the bosom of the earth, and covered with a great stone.

Sleep in the peace of the Lord, forgetting the world and all its vanities; despising all that is reckoned great and pleasing in the eyes of men; that when you rise from your slumber, you may come forth refreshed in virtue and grace, and at the last day be raised again to share in the eternal glory of the elect. Amen.

CHAP. XIII

On the invocation of the holy name of Jesus, and of the blessed Mary, his Virgin Mother

“*Perfice gressus meos in semitis tuis; ut non moveantur vestigia mea.*” (Ps. 16:15.)

“Perfect thou my goings in thy paths; that my footsteps be not turned.”

Thy ways, O Lord Jesus Christ, are beautiful and pure; and to those that walk therein thy paths are safe, and right, and perfect.

All thy paths are peaceful and holy, and lead the faithful and humble of heart, to the kingdom of heaven.

Wherever you go, whatsoever road you follow, wherever you rest or stop, call upon Jesus, call upon Mary, his holy Mother; with confidence repeat these words of the psalmist, as the guide of thy way; “Perfect thou my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps be not moved:” and add to them these, “Perfect thou my goings,” O Jesus, “in thy paths, that my footsteps be not moved,” to behold vanity, or to wound my soul, by words of idleness.

2. Let this prayer be for thy life’s viaticum, (provision for thy journey); let it be as a staff to support you; say it often, say it devoutly.

“Jesus and Mary, be ever with me in the way, as my good guards at all times and in every place, lest haply I wander in bye-paths; lest my senses or my heart be seduced by the many illusions that surround me.”

This holy prayer, “Jesus and Mary,” is short, and easy to remember; it is easily carried about; is sweet and pleasing; the poor pilgrim who flies from the vanities of the world, will find in it the consolation, strength, and protection which he is in need of, to hold on his course in safety; it will refresh the fatigue of the journey, and calm the disquietude of his soul; it

will fill him with comfort, and aid him mightily in resisting the obstacles which he may meet with; and it will lead him by a path direct to life eternal.

This holy prayer is addressed to a surer and more faithful escort, than all the princes and counts of this world, and to higher saints than all the saints in heaven or earth.

This prayer spoken fervently will gain you the favour of all the court of heaven, who ever, with all reverence, follow Jesus Christ their Lord, and their holy lady, St. Mary, the blessed mother of Jesus, most worthy of all praise, and of the homage and benediction of all created things.

He that has these for his companions in his earthly pilgrimage, shall find in them devout patrons in the hour of death.

Never depart from Jesus on earth, if you would live and rejoice with Jesus and Mary for ever in heaven.

Your steps will be more secure, with less fear of wandering, if you have Jesus and Mary in your heart; if they be the object of your praise, your benediction, your applause, your transports, your cries of delight, the joy of your heart, your tears and sighs, your aim, your embraces, your regards, and your adoration.

Blessed are those who call on Jesus and Mary continually, who salute them devoutly, who recall them lovingly to their memory, who honour them above all, who sing their praise with lively joy, who glorify them highly, who love them ardently, who make their love the delight of their souls, and who deem it happiness to sing and celebrate their high estate.

Oh, how sweet is Jesus! how sweet is holy Mary, his beloved mother!

Blessed is the pilgrim, who in the time of his exile, is ever mindful of the celestial country, where Jesus and Mary are surrounded by angels and saints in joy ineffable and endless glory.

Blessed is the pilgrim who seeks no dwelling-place on earth, who desires "to be dissolved and to be with Christ in heaven."

Blessed is the poor and needy, who every day beggeth the bread of heaven, and who ceases not to stretch forth his suppliant hands, till he receives the crumbs which fall from the table of his Lord.

Blessed is he that is invited to the Supper of the Lamb, who here below receives the sacrament of his love, and waits in patience until he be called to sit down to the banquet in heaven.

4. He that receives the communion devoutly, or the priest, who reverently and devoutly offers to the honour of God the holy sacrifice; so often does he sit at the table with Jesus and his blessed Mother, to eat and drink spiritually with them.

Such a one is the disciple of Jesus, the minister of the blessed Virgin Mary, the companion of the angels, the fellow-citizen of the Apostles, the servant of God, the relation of the saints, and the friend of Heaven.

He flies the tumult of the world: he turns away from idle talk; he meditates on the words of Jesus, and watches carefully over his heart and affections, that no thought shall enter there to offend Jesus, or Mary, or the saints.

“He shall receive a blessing from the Lord, and mercy from God his Saviour” (Ps. 23:5.) Whosoever he shall call upon Him, He shall hear him from his holy heaven—whosoever he may be, and whatsoever danger may oppress him.

For the disciples were on the sea, in danger of sinking, and they called on Jesus, and Jesus appeared forthwith, and said to them, “Be not afraid,” (St. John 6:20), “Be of good heart, it is I, fear ye not,” (St. Matt. 14:27.)

The voice of Jesus is full of sweetness to bring consolation; of power to protect; of joy to make the soul glad; of indulgence to pardon, and of grace to lead to life eternal.

CHAP. XIV

On the mighty struggle against vice, after the example of the saints

“Viriliter agite, et confortetur cor vestrum.” (Ps. 30:25.)

“Do ye manfully, and let your heart be strengthened.”

As the passion and cross of Jesus, and the sufferings of the martyrs, teach us to bear the pains of this life, so the purity of the blessed Virgin Mary, the chastity of the holy virgins, widows, and saints of God, show how we may overcome temptations of the flesh, despise the riches, fly the honours, and renounce all the vanities of the world, to give ourselves up entirely to the love and acquirement of heavenly things.

O servant of God, walk in the footsteps of those courageous souls, who have given you the example of invincible patience—like them, resist the devil and all his temptations.

Let the constancy with which virgins, weak of body, strove, induce you to cast from you with contempt all sensual pleasures and every other vice.

If in his mercy God has granted to you temporal riches—you, who are nothing—use not these to satiate vanity—beware lest ye fix on them your foolish heart; for you know not how soon you may be taken away from them, or how long you may enjoy them.

Ask not long life nor riches, seek rather for the witness of a good conscience, which is better than all the treasures of this world; for the greater thy riches on earth, the more rigorous shall the account be that you must render in heaven.

2. Ah! how deceitful is the favour of this world! how short its glory! for after the riches, honours, dignities, delights of this life, come the tears and

groans, and dreadful punishments of hell, from whence there is no redemption.

But oh! how great is the happiness of the elect! they are with God, with his angels and saints, inebriated with a happiness which comprehends all joys and shall never end.

Happy men and wise virgins! how happy ye who have renounced all for the love of Christ, to walk in the narrow path that leads to the eternal kingdom.

3. Learn, faithful and devout servants of Jesus Christ, that during this life, ye must watch, and pray, and fast, and labour, and fight against the divers temptations of the flesh and the spirit.

The flesh must be mortified, lest it rise, and lust against the spirit; lest it seduce the soul, and prevailing over it, draw it down to hell.

To what purpose is the body pampered delicately in this world, if when it quits this passing life, it must endure hell's fearful torments.

And what boots it to be praised and honoured by men here below, if he must be so soon humbled and condemned to dwell eternally with the spirits of darkness, and the impious sons of the evil one.

There shall the shame and confusion be extreme, in the presence of God and his saints, of those who pass for great and learned, and yet are cast out from the number of the elect; but their's shall be true honour and glory, when they appear before God in the presence of all his saints, and show what they have suffered for the love of Christ.

Hear what words of consolation Jesus Christ addresses to his disciples, and to all who suffer injury or distress for his sake:—"Blessed are ye when they shall revile you, and persecute you, and speak all that is evil against you (untruly) for my sake; be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great is heaven." (St. Matth. 5:11, 12.)

CHAP. XV

On Steadfastness

“Stabiles estote—in opere Domini semper.” (St. Pauli ad 1 Cor. 15:58.)

“Be ye steadfast—in the work of the Lord always.”

Answer me, my dear brother: you run here and there in the world, you see and hear many things; but to what use is all this to you, whilst you withdraw yourself from the kingdom of heaven? what profit or holiness do you draw from all, while you withdraw yourself from the kingdom of heaven?

Blessed is he that lives in retirement and recollection, who enters into himself, who keeps a strict watch over his heart and body, and who asks pardon of God with sighs and tears the moment he perceives that his soul has been wandering.

But woe to you that go out often and heedlessly from your solitude, who waste unprofitably a portion of your precious time, and who are a scandal to others.

God giveth inward peace abundantly to him who loveth solitude; who gives his heart in secret to God, who prays frequently, who is employed in useful occupations, who feeds his soul with holy studies, and meditates lovingly on the truths of salvation.

3. The idler and the babbler deserve severe reproof, and their fellowship must be shunned, for they will corrupt the simple by the frivolity of their discourse; or, by the depravity of their manners, bring trouble and scandal into the souls of the little ones.

You, my brother, whose heart is dissipated and fond of idle jests, think on the pains of purgatory; where, for every trifling, every idle word or thought, each one of thy idle actions must be punished by bitter stripes.

It is better then to live here in fear and trembling, in penance and tears than to share the lot of the reprobate, and to be tormented with them by devils for all eternity.

There is surely no joy nor mirth in the fire of hell, whence none can ever draw thee out.

3. He that would reflect often on these truths, and meditate on them seriously, would soon conceive a disgust for all worldly vanities, and abhor all sensual desires; that so he might avoid eternal punishment, and after death obtain eternal happiness.

Woe unto those on earth, and heavier woe to come on those who are but lightly moved by the thought of the divine judgments, and by the fear of sufferings which their body has not yet tried.

CHAP. XVI

On divine consolation in tribulation for Christ's sake

“In mundo pressuram habebitis; sed confidite, ego vici mundum.” (Sti. Johan. 16:33.)

“In the world you shall have distress; but have confidence, I have overcome the world.”

It is a comfort to have a fellow in misery, saith the proverb. But who is that friend so tender and so good, who shares our miseries and infirmities? it is Jesus Christ our Lord, who suffered and was crucified for us; and who, in the gospel, calls himself the physician and shepherd of our souls, the comforter of the poor, the weak and the afflicted: the physician of the sick, and the stay of those that fall, for “they that are well,” he says, “have no need of a physician, but they that are sick.” (St. Mark 2:17.) And in like manner David speaks of him, when he addresses these words of comfort to afflicted souls, “the Lord is nigh unto them that are of a contrite heart;” (Ps. 2) and in another Psalm, to give confidence to his servant, proved by temptations and tribulations, God himself says, “I am with him in tribulation, I will deliver him, and I will glorify him.” (Ps. 90:15.)

Truly there is comfort and consolation to all that are sad or afflicted, in Christ who was himself tempted and afflicted, and stricken with many sorrows.

God, who is sovereignly good and just in all his ways, would not send pains and tribulations in this life, if they were not useful and salutary to our souls.

And who art thou, sinner, who art loaded with many sins? who art thou who dare, in affliction, to wince under the hand of Him who spared not his

own Son; for it is meet and just that the guilty and unprofitable servant should bear without murmuring the light corrections which his master inflicts on him; since His well-beloved Son, and He all innocence, was wounded with so many stripes.

It is meet and just that a sick man, to recover his health, should sip some drops from the bitter chalice, which already his physician has drained before him, to neutralize the poison of death, and with health of soul and body, to free him from eternal death.

The heavy burthen of the servant should be sweetened by the remembrance of the heavier burthen of sorrows that his innocent master has borne; and the sick should be much comforted in his sufferings, when he reflects that these, if borne with resignation, shall serve to cleanse him from sins, and to assure his hope of life eternal.

3. It is, indeed, glorious for a slave to be clothed with the same cloth as his master; and to wear, as son and heir, the royal purple, that will give a title to assist at the eternal spousals of the Lamb.

The cloth with which Jesus is clothed, is humility of heart, the privation of things the most necessary, patience in adversity, and perseverance in virtue.

He that receives with gratitude the chastisements which God inflicts on him, finds in his sorrows the safety of his soul, and shall receive in heaven a fairer crown of glory.

“Blessed is he that understandeth, concerning the needy and the poor,” Jesus, (Ps. 40:1) who, though richer than all, willed, for the love of us, to become needy and poor. Blessed is he, that despising the riches and ease of this life, walks wisely in His footsteps, and takes up His cross daily to the hour of his death for the safety of his soul.

CHAP. XVII

On watching over the conscience, in every place and at all times

“Anima mea in manibus meis semper.” (Ps. 118:109.)

“My soul is continually in my hands.”

Nothing is more useful or more salutary for you, if you desire to come to life eternal, then to meditate continually on the salvation of thy soul.

Open every book of piety—run through all the treatises on the spiritual life, you will find that there is no salvation but in God, and in a virtuous life.

Hence the Lord and Redeemer of our souls said to his disciples, “What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul?” (St. Matth. 16:26.)

He that meditates often on these words, and who is more seriously concerned for the welfare of his soul than for the increase of his fortune, or for the entertainment of his body, is a merchant truly wise, (St. Matth. 13:45), for he prefers spiritual riches, which perish not, to the passing goods of earth.

He is one of those good and faithful servants of Christ, who makes his two talents four, his five ten, instead of despising its worth, and burying it contemptuously in the earth; but who destributes it to the poor, that he may have part in their prayers, and to the altar of God, and so returns thanks to the Lord, however small it may seem, for the benefits he has received. (St. Matth. 25:14.)

Blessed is the good servant who is faithful in a little, (St. Luke 19:17), who employs every moment of his life in a useful manner; who is not busied in what concerns him not, and who, to please God, becomes like one

that is deaf and dumb. He walks in peace through the tumult of the world, “having his soul continually in his hands.”

Take no thought then of the conduct of thy neighbour, but in as far as the love of God and charity constrain you.

2. Covet not the praises of men, for they are vain. Be not afraid of their reproach; for, far from hurting your soul, humiliations purify, and make it worthy to receive in heaven a more brilliant crown; and none deserve to be glorified in the kingdom of heaven who cannot endure reproach for the love of God on earth.

A Meditation and Prayer.—Since then thou hast suffered for the love of me, O my God, it is but fitting that I should suffer for the love of Thee; and that I should walk in thy footsteps as far as I am able.

Thou hast said to St. Peter, “Follow thou me,” (St. John 21:23), but alas! how little can I bear for thee!

I make many resolutions, but scarcely one in ten I execute; I speak much, but do little; all blame is mine, and I have no excuse; idleness and indifference increase each day the number of my sins. What should I think or say? alas! nought remains but to entreat thy mercy; and to cry, “Lord, I have sinned, have mercy upon me.”

Thus were led all the saints that have gone before us; such are the lessons they have left us; such, each day, is still the conduct of all thy faithful.

Oh all ye saints and friends of God, pray for me, for I am weak, and I humbly implore the assistance of all.

The Prayer of the Poor

O Holy of holies, Lord my God, incline thine ear to the prayer of thy poor servant, “Help me, and I shall be saved, and I will meditate always on thy justifications.” (Ps. 118:117.)

Oh that I deserved to be one of the least of thy servants, in the kingdom thou hast prepared for those who are humble and who love thee.

I love thee then, O Lord my strength, with all my heart, as thou, thyself, hast commanded by thy sacred mouth.

Thou art my hope, and my salvation, and my desire is ever towards thee.

Keep me from all error, by a perfect understanding; from all impurity by a clean heart; from all kind of doubt, by a right faith; from all distrust, by a steadfast hope; from all disgust and negligence by a burning charity; from all inquietude by great patience; from all unclean thoughts by holy

meditation; from the attacks of the devil, by continual prayer; from frequent distractions, by a sustained attention in reading; from listlessness and drowsiness, by useful occupation, and from thinking of satisfying my vices, by the remembrance of thy holy passion. Come with all these graces, O Lord, and confirm me in all thy holy words. Amen.

CHAP. XVIII

On Solitude and Silence

“Ecce elongavi fugiens, et mansi in solitudine.” (Ps. 54:8.)

“Lo, I have gone far off, flying away, and I abode in the wilderness.”

1. And why? because of the numerous advantages which will come to my soul in so doing; and to restrain my heart from the distractions with which the world allures the senses.

What we have never seen or heard of, can neither excite our regret, nor trouble the peace of our soul.

Solitude and silence therefore are profitable to inward peace, and dispose us for the gift of fervent prayer; and it is much more easy to find solitude and silence in the retirement of the desert, than in the tumult of the world.

As the fish soon dies when taken out of the water, so the monk out of his cell becomes sullied, and lightly gives way to distraction.

The wise bee abandons the flower as soon as it has gathered the honey, and returns, to deposit in its hive, the provisions that are to nourish it in the dearth of winter; wherefore it lays up carefully in its cell the treasure of its sweetness, before it resumes its airy course, lest it lose the fruit of its labours; for the precious perfume becomes more sweet by being put in a close vessel, and loses, in a little time, all its virtue when exposed to the open air.

Flowers long preserve their beauty in the inclosure of a garden, whose walls protect them, and they fade when the hand of man gathers them.

Roses bloom freshly in the sheltered inclosure; but are trodden under foot, and wither in the public way.

2. So does the monk lose the sweetness of devotion, whom lightness or inconstancy leads often into the world; but he that flies from its distraction, sheds abroad in his retreat the sweet odour of sanctity.

Exposed to the wind the taper is extinguished—enclosed in a lanthorn it continues to burn; so is it with devotion; you may preserve it securely in the secret chamber, but it will soon dissipate if you expose it to the agitation of worldly business.

Love then solitude and silence, if you would enjoy devotion and peace of heart; for he that would move among men unhurt, must, indeed, be well covered in strong armour of proof.

Like the blessed Virgin Mary, who dwelt alone in her chamber, entertaining her soul with the holy angel, whom God had sent to her from Heaven; may the love of devotion keep you in solitude and in your cell, that to you also may come the holy angel, the messenger of heaven, and faithful guardian of your soul, and that you may keep off the evil one, and all his illusions.

A devout lover of silence hath said, “It is seldom, after much conversation with men, that my conscience has not something to reproach me with.”

And another, “Our words should be very edifying, to be preferred before silence.”

And a third, “That a word is indeed good when spoken in season.”

Lastly, a fourth adds, “He that keepeth his mouth closed, shall not be guilty of detraction or lying.”

3. With what esteem and pleasure does not one listen to the discourse of a man who permits nothing bad, nothing vain, nothing deceitful, nothing false, to pass his lips.

Many speak much, and of many things; but never without peril, for the tongue is naturally prone to evil. If then you cleave to solitude, and there watch over your tongue, and pray frequently, you shall find much peace.

Esteem the good man who practises virtue in silence; rebuke the babbler who gives himself up to idle words; but avoid him that dissembles.

Fly from tumult; love retreat; imitate the humble and devout; bear patiently with those that molest you for the sake of Christ crucified for you.

4. A novice (frater), asked an aged brother which statute in the ordinal was the most sure means of attaining true peace and devotion? the old man gave him this remarkable answer: “Keep the silence enjoined by thy fathers, avoid the tumult of men, and shun idleness.”

There are three things indispensable in a religious life, and, moreover, are most pleasing to God and his angels.

1st. Manual labour, to overcome sloth.

2nd. The study and reading of holy books, to prevent disrelish and weariness of heart.

3rd. The continual use of prayer, to scare the stratagems of the devil.

The ancient fathers of a spiritual life, taught, and the modern ones repeat after them, that silence and prayer draw down benediction from God, give to the soul profound light, and dispose it to meditate with much fruit on the highest mysteries.

But he that lives in dissipation, and fosters idleness by frivolous discourse, makes himself unworthy of the heavenly gifts, and becomes a trouble to his brethren.

The vain man cannot long keep silence, for he wishes to pass for wise, and to be praised above others.

He that talks presumptuously is worthily blamed by many, but he that keeps a modest silence deserves the esteem of all.

He that despises himself, and who thinks others better than himself, shows great humility of heart; but great is the pride of him who is self-sufficient, and who persists in his own opinion contrary to the will of God, and in opposition to all his brethren.

This vice is the most dangerous leprosy of all; what God abhors and often strikes with sudden death.

He that is simple and innocent, and submits humbly to authority, shall be always in joy, and nothing shall shake his security.

Speak little; avoid frivolous conversation; speak nothing but what is profitable; do all things with modesty; so shall your praise be great among your brethren.

“Be moderate in all things—moderation is the fairest of virtues,” (Cato), and so Christ himself teaches us: “Have salt in you, and peace among you.” (St. Mark 9:49.)

And the apostle St. Paul: “Let your speech be always in grace, seasoned with salt.” (Coloss. 4:6.)

And holy Job, when he says, “Can an unsavoury thing be eaten that is not seasoned with salt.” (Job 6:6.)

5. The chaste and modest man sets a continual watch over his mouth and heart, and all his affections, that naturally incline to evil, lest he fall into sin, and offend God, or his neighbour: but there is no compunction in the heart of him who takes pleasure in listening to idle tales, and repeating them to others.

He that guards not his heart and sets not a watch at the gate of his lips, shall lose in a very little while the grace of compunction; and the monk who is fond of talking, soon passes the bounds of moderate conversation.

If you had the crucified Jesus in your heart, your mouth would not lend itself so easily to vain and idle conversation; but since you have not Jesus steadfast in your heart, you seek abroad for consolations, weak and illusory, and but ill-adapted to calm the afflictions of your heart, for Jesus alone can afford it true consolation, and heal the wound which sin has made.

In a little moment, with one word, he can assuage all your infirmities; for the virtue of His grace is more ready and wider in its effects, than are the ravages of sin.

Why do you lend your ears to the vain rumours of the world; which so often trouble and distract your heart? Why do you refuse to listen to the sweet instructions of Christ, who daily and nightly offers to you consolation and strength against all tribulation.

CHAP. XIX

On the refuge of the poor, in God their helper

“Tibi derelictus est pauper, orphano tu eris adjutor.” (Ps. 9:36.)

“To Thee is the poor man left. Thou wilt be a helper to the orphan.”

Blessed is the poor who has God for his help and support in all his tribulations; and for his comforter in his sufferings; who puts all his hope and trust in God, and in his last hour awaits from Him the crown of glory in the kingdom of eternal bliss.

Voluntary poverty, assumed for the love of Christ, is a precious virtue in the sight of God. His everlasting recompense is in heaven, under the ward of the angels; thieves cannot steal it, nor the violent bear it away; nor can the murderer deprive him of the gift in store for him.

By renouncing all the satisfactions of the world, the servant of Christ dwells beyond the circle of the daily dangers and cares which surround the rich on earth.

The faithful soul, who for the love of Jesus Christ, and for his kingdom's sake, despoils himself of every thing in this world, enjoys true liberty, and possesses all things in Jesus; who for the love of us became poor, and submitted to suffering; who was hung naked on the cross, and had not where to lay his head, nor where to move his feet and hands.

Who amongst us can compare our nakedness with His? assuredly no one; wherefore, “His name alone is exalted, the praise of Him is above heaven and earth.” (Ps. 148:13.)

O salutary poverty, thou now-a-days wouldst meet nothing but contempt among men, unless God had been the first to submit voluntarily to thy privations!

Oh happy poverty, that cuttest us off from the pride of the eyes, and the occasion of many sins!

2. He is truly poor in spirit, who neither from word nor deed draws forth vanity, and who lest he fall thereby, covets not the honours of the world.

O what an excellent virtue is voluntary poverty! Having nothing of its own, it opens to the soul the gates of heaven, it adds new jewels to the crown of glory, that is laid up in heaven; it makes us worthy to receive with the martyrs the palm of patience, after we have past the strife of life, consummated in the service of Christ.

For this is truly and faithfully to labour in the service of God, when for His love, we bear with want and all the inconveniences which follow poverty.

Blessed is he who learns how to profit by his wants and infirmities, and who in all the privations he endures, is still submissive to the will of God.

Let not poverty afflict your heart when you suffer want.—If men mock you, or friends desert you, give not way to wrath—but turn your heart to Jesus, who became poor and weak for you. Take comfort in God—in God alone,—if you would have your soul rejoice for ever,—for there is no abiding consolation out of Him; and how great soever it may seem, there is none to answer your call in the hour of need.

3. Choose Jesus Christ for your only friend and brother; renounce all to follow Him.

Avoid above all the fellowship of those who would turn you from his service; and by leading you again into the world, lead you to the gates of hell. “For wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction,” saith Jesus Christ, “and many there are, who go in thereat.” (Matt. 7:13.)

From Him only can you find the consolation you require; from Him who is able to give the kingdom of heaven to those who for His sake, renounce the kingdom of this world, and all its vanities; “for the world passes away, and the concupiscence thereof,” (1 John, 2:17), like smoke driven by the wind, and like the flowers of the field that wither away.

Thou, then, my brother, who hast submitted to voluntary poverty, go on boldly in your holy enterprise; be constant day and night in the service of God, in the peaceful abode your piety has made choice of. Remember that you have forsaken your parents and your friends, to unite yourself wholly to God: elsewhere you may find them again, in the kingdom of Christ, and rejoice with them in the company of all the saints.

Your light afflictions and passing sorrows here on earth, shall be recompensed in heaven by the joy of eternal rest.

Reflect often on the sacred wounds of Christ; think of the grievous sores of the poor Lazarus; that thereby your last hour may be sweetened, and the separation from this world less severe.

CHAP. XX

On the poor and sick Lazarus

“Ego sum pauper et dolens, Deus adjuva me.” (Ps. 68:30.)

“I am poor and sorrowful, let thy salvation, O God, set me up.”

This is the prayer of one who is poor and in suffering; who seeks to obtain the kingdom of Heaven.

Ye suffering poor, bear patiently, for yet a little while, your sorrows and privations; you shall not have long to wait the hour of your deliverance.

Give thanks to God, for it is better to be afflicted on earth with the poor and the sick, than to be tormented in hell with the wicked who revelled here below in wealth and power.

Recal to mind your past transgressions, whether against God or your neighbour, and bear the chastisement which the Lord sends to afflict you, in remission of such as you have not fully repented of, or for which you have not made sufficient satisfaction.

Comfort your soul by the memory of the cruel sorrows and wounds of Jesus Christ. Thy divine Saviour has endured more bitter stripes for thee, than thou canst suffer for the love of Him.

Comfort your soul in Him, by recalling to your memory how Lazarus, poor, and covered with sores in this life, was, after death, joyously received into Abraham’s bosom; and that it may fear the end of that rich man, who fared sumptuously, but who, after his feasting, was buried in hell, whence there was no departure.

Make now thy choice—you must either endure for a short while the pains and privations of Lazarus, which lead to joy eternal in Christ, or partake in the dainties of the rich man in full health, which end shortly, and be buried in hell, to be tormented eternally by devils.

Few words are needed by him that is wise.

2. Blessed is he that understands and purifies his heart from all depraved affections, whilst it is yet in his power; lest he be condemned to endure the horrible punishments which await the impenitent sinner.

For he on whom holy instructions make no impression, or awaken no sentiment of penance, shall be given over one day to cruel pains, which he shall be constrained to endure fruitlessly for all eternity.

Lazarus, poor and suffering in this life, was, after death, delivered from these punishments, and was borne by holy angels in joy to Abraham's bosom.

Remark also in the life of the poor Lazarus, the multiplied consolations which the merciful goodness of the Lord offers to him in his misery.

I have never heard that he was visited by rich friends to comfort him in his misery; that he had servants to wait his orders; that he was surrounded by anxious brethren; but Jesus tells us, that the dogs came and licked his sores! these were all that came to him in his misery! no consolations from man, only the dogs ministered to him! Can any misery be worse than this? Yet no murmuring or impatient word fell from his lips, but rather thanksgiving and praise; for he that was refused comfort from the instrumentality of man, received it meekly from the sensibility of beasts.

Thou then, my suffering brother, murmur not, if, even for a season, you may be deprived of consolation, or the goad of your infirmities press yet more heavily. Remember that the divine mercy so disposes it, in order that "Cut and burned in this world, you may not be lost in the next."

Lazarus, perhaps, was not guilty in the sight of God, but of very slight faults; while thou hast often and very grievously offended Him.

Bear then your infirmities with patience; and if sometimes the consolations of man be withheld from you, rejoice, nevertheless, that, with Lazarus, thou mayest thereby be worthy to enter the gates of the heavenly kingdom.

CHAP. XXI

On the clear understanding of the Holy Scriptures

“Declaratio sermonum tuorum illuminate, et intellectum dat parvulis.” (Ps. 118:130.)

“The declaration of thy words giveth light, and giveth understanding to little ones.”

1. All that is written in the Old and New Testaments, has been written for our instruction, and with the design of bringing us to serve God faithfully, to inspire in us a horror of what is evil, and a love, boundless, pure, and entire, in this world, and in that which is to come, for Him who is our sovereign good.

Ask humbly for a knowledge of what you are ignorant of, and ask respectfully from those who are better instructed than yourself, for the right understanding of what you do not comprehend. “For the declaration of the words of God giveth light to the hearts of the little ones.”

If you be not capable of rising to the knowledge of the most sublime truths; learn with “the little ones” to know such as are small; it is for such that our Lord Jesus hath said, “Suffer the little children to come to me, for the kingdom of heaven is for such.” (St. Matt. 19:14.)

Beware of rashly sounding what is concealed from your understanding; leave to the Holy Spirit the care of discovering such to you. Follow his inspirations with a lively faith; for the Holy Spirit is the source of all truth, and He can never bear testimony to error.

3. If you have doubts on some points, attribute them to the blindness of your spirit, or to your ignorance, and not to the silence or obscurity of the

Holy Scriptures, which unfold all the needful documents of eternal salvation.

Read then with pleasure the canonical Scriptures; and be attentive to the explication of them which the doctors of the Church have given, and study to understand them well.

But, nevertheless, let not thy diligence in this study withdraw thee from prayer, or the celebration of the holy mass; for often during holy mass, and in the fervour of prayer, God communicates to devout souls many hidden things which He conceals from those who search curiously, and full of self-sufficiency.

Simple words bring instruction to the little ones and the ignorant; but subtle explanations, which they do not understand, are profitless and vain.

Those that in the refectory, or in the choir, listen attentively to the reading, and seek with prudence to penetrate the mystical sense of the facts recited to them, extract, from all they read or hear read, the honey of the word of God.

Whence, though during life man may ever add something to his knowledge, and discover every day truths of a higher order; yet he shall not attain to the clear and perfect intelligence of the angels; nor shall he enjoy the beatific vision, till, by the help of Christ, he shall have entered into the glory of eternal bliss.

3. Strong and solid food is hurtful to little ones, and the weak and babes must be fed with light and delicate food.

Simple music and moderate songs touch sometimes the ear more pleasantly than the swell of voices, which break on the ear like peals of thunder, and fatigue rather than charm.

Too bright lightning dazzles the eye; a moderate light keeps the vision in activity.

The imprudent traveller, who would rashly swim across a deep river, may be drowned; but he that passes by the bridge, reaches the other side without fear or danger.

The lamb passes freely in a narrow path; where the heavy bullock falls, and is caught, but to be led to the slaughter.

So the soul whose faith is simple, and whose submission humble, findeth grace; where the soul full of confidence in itself, loses all it possesses.

High knowledge but too easily puffeth up the proud; and turns, at last, to the confusion of those who glory therein.

4. I have seen simple souls bathed in tears in the fervour of prayer, while those who sang with a loud and melodious voice, felt nothing but dryness of heart. And why this difference? because the simple and humble soul, in all it says or does, seeks only the glory of God. The voice of the simple in heart, is with God in heaven; the voice of the wandering and dissipated singer, is with men in the streets and public places.

He that attends seriously to the spiritual sense of the Psalms, who reads them slowly, or sings them with attention, tastes, in abundance, the sweetness of devotion. For the Lord is sweet to such as are right in heart, and to those who seek his glory, and not the satisfactions of their vanity.

Blessed is the voice of him that sings and declares the praises of God in such a manner, as to fill the hearts of those who hear him with compunction.

5. Before crowing, the cock plumes his wings, as if to prepare himself; so should the good brother correct his own faults before undertaking to correct those of others; and he that would announce with prudence and success the word of God, must begin by correcting in himself those vices he condemns in others.

It is thus that St. Paul, while instructing others, humbly calls himself the chief of sinners. "Jesus Christ hath come into this world to save sinners, of whom I am the chief," (1 Tim. 1:15), and "who am not worthy to be called an apostle." And why, O most glorious saint? "because I persecuted the Church of God." How then art thou now become a vessel of election, filled with holiness, and truly worthy of all glory? I owe it not either to myself or to them, but by the vocation and revelation of Jesus Christ, from whom I have learned to be meek and humble of heart, and to be obedient to his gospel. I know of no good in myself; all that I do or teach, I attribute to him, who, by his grace, hath called me to the faith which I preach, and to which I shall be faithful unto death. For only "by the grace of God I am what I am." (1 Cor. 15:9.) And his grace in me has not been in vain; but remains in me, and shall remain till I come to him who hath redeemed me and saved me by his precious blood.

CHAP. XXII

On the great merit of patience for the sake of Christ

“In patientiâ vestra possidebitis animas vestras.” (St. Luke 21:19.)

“In your patience you shall possess your souls.”

1. When you are spoken to over harshly, or reproved unjustly, give not way to the first emotion of anger, nor reply sharply, but keep silence, or speak humbly, or suffer with patience like your example Jesus, who was silent when they brought false witness against him, and when he was scourged, he murmured not.

Or if it be useful or necessary to justify your actions, do it gently, and in such a manner as Christ did: when rudely struck by the servant of the high-priest, he answered meekly and reasonably; so shall you edify others, so shall you be freed from confusion.

In every circumstance or contradiction of wicked tongues, be patient, and piously silent to those who oppose you.

2. In the spiritual interest of your soul, never forget how precious a virtue is patience, which adorns the soul with all virtues, and leads to the martyr's palm.

This Christ hath taught in his words; this he hath explained in his passion; for when he was accused before the princes of the priesthood, and the ancients of the people, he answered nothing, putting in practise what he before taught, “Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart, and you shall find rest to your souls.” (St. Matt. 11:29.)

You cannot find elsewhere sure peace and true rest, but in God alone, in the practice of sincere humility, and of an indulgent patience which overcomes all adversaries.

Put then all your hope in God, and not in any creature, great or small, for without God all is but vanity; and all good is in God.

CHAP. XXIII

On the good conversation of the humble monk

“Fuge, dilecte mi, fuge.” (Cant. 8:14.)

“Flee away, O my beloved.”

Why should I flee away? Because of the many dangers which gird thee in on every side in the world, and which fall on those which converse therein.

He that would give himself up to the service of God, must love solitude, prayer, study and labour; and so by useful employments, preserve his soul from the perils of vice, spend his time with fruit, and edify his neighbour.

But he that loves the world, and willingly converses therein, seldom keeps his heart unspotted, and always returns to his peaceful cell, with less devotion than when he went out.

Pious and modest conversation is pleasing to all; but harsh and inconsiderate words wound the ears of our friends

He that loves virtue speaks the truth, but he that makes use of lying speech, deceives his neighbour, and makes himself hated.

He that is truly humble, seeks not praise for the good he has done; but refers to God all the good that there is in his actions, and attributes to himself only what is evil.

The liar drives Christ from his heart; and he that would fathom the mysteries of religion, confounds himself, and justly falls into error; but he that speaks frankly and straight forward, is honoured and loved by all.

2. We are all brethren, created by the same God; we are all sinners, born of a guilty father; but, by the grace of Christ, we are called to the faith: we are regenerated by the same baptism; and we are all but one body in Christ. Let no one then despise, or ridicule, or offend his neighbour in any thing;

we ought rather to help and instruct him, as far as we are able, doing to him as we would be done by, were we in want.

He that by words of edification confirms the weak in the faith, feeds the sick with the bread of heaven.

He that consoles the afflicted, gives a life-cup to the thirsty.

He that calms the wrath of his brother by meek words, stays a dog from biting, by anointing his tongue with honey.

He that checks a wandering tongue, brings much peace to his devout brethren.

He that prefers himself before others, shows that he has but little judgment, and deserves confusion.

He that is humble in all things, deserves to receive more abundant grace and honour.

The pious and humble breaks the snares of the evil one by prayer, and escapes; while the proud, led on by vain glory, falls into his toils, and perishes.

From which may the pious Jesus ever preserve us, and grant us the joy of heaven. Amen.

CHAP. XXIV

On cautious speaking, and brotherly compassion

“Medice, cura teipsum.” (St. Luke 4:23.)

“Physician, heal thyself.”

Keep in mind these words, before you speak to, or rebuke your neighbour; lest haply, in reproving him indiscreetly or unjustly, you commit a greater fault than his.

The mouth of the just and prudent watches his opportunity, and seeks to learn the character and habits of the person to whom he wishes to give advice, lest he hurt him whom he would correct.

The mouth of the wise and discreet man is worthy of honour, and like a solid vessel enriched with gold, and filled with balm and odoriferous perfumes.

The sanctity of your words, and the regularity of your morals, edify those who are in the world, excite the indifferent, rebuke the negligent, bring the wandering heart to compunction, instruct the ignorant, and inflame the fervour of the devout. For the example of good men persuades more effectively to contempt of the world, and amendment of life, than the wordy eloquence of worldly learning.

2. It must not be thought, that a desire to instruct and correct others, is a proof of ability or virtue; but to govern oneself well, to receive reproof with gratitude, and to labour fervently in the reform of your heart, this is great wisdom both before God and men.

Learn to put a favourable interpretation on what is doubtful; never to pass judgment on what is unknown to you; to avoid all open evil; to eschew all

scandal; to bear patiently with the defects or faults of your brethren; and to commit to the mercy of God what you cannot correct.

Reflect that God has borne with you, and bears with you still every day in a great many weaknesses; and notwithstanding you do not amend them, though you often declare your intention, and that you have the will to do so. But His mercy still awaits you, to lead you to penance, and to teach you your own infirmities, so as you may humbly sue for pardon, and learn not to despise or rashly condemn your neighbour.

Be you then patient and merciful to your brother in few things, as God is to you in many things.

The devout and humble man speaks little, lest his much speaking should be hurtful to the recollection of his spirit.

The proud speaks harshly, and the hasty man casts trouble in the soul of those he corrects; as he, himself, is disturbed when corrected. But the meek bears patiently with those he would correct, makes use of entreaty rather than reproach, is compassionate for their sins, and shows himself, indeed, the friend of their souls.

He that seeks to be first, exposes himself to many perils, and makes himself despicable.

The lover of vain glory, keeps not long silence, lest he pass for ignorant; for he is ashamed of mean and servile employments; he cannot bear to put himself in the last place, or to sit on the lowest seat. And yet there is no honour greater on earth than the practise of humility in all things, to place oneself beneath other men, and voluntarily to fulfil the office of servant to others, for the sake of Christ, who has said, "I am in the midst of you, as he that serveth." (St. Luke 22:27.)

Learn then, young man, to be silent, if you would not be covered with confusion, when you speak in the presence of your elders.

For it is more profitable to be silent, than to speak foolishly.

4. It is a great art to receive correction in silence, and much wisdom to speak modestly and in season; and to say nothing before enlightened men, but what is just and fit.

The fool keeps neither time, nor purpose, nor order; moreover he often suffers disquietude from the humiliations his own unadvised discourse has justly drawn upon him.

The presumptive young man, who speaks inconsiderately, is like the fool that stands on a precipice. If he receive advice with docility, correction in silence, and commands with submission, there will be great hope that he may make much progress in virtue, and one day flourish like the lily of the valleys.

Great is the pride of him who persists in his own designs, contrary to the will of God, and who refuses submission to the wise counsels of the aged.

Since it is difficult for man in all his words and actions to keep always within the bounds of moderation, and to watch over his soul; hence it is that religious persons love solitude, and seek retreat and silence, to give themselves up to prayer apart from the tumult of the world.

CHAP. XXV

On the uncertain hour of death, and the speedy end of this life

“Vigilate, quia nescitis diem neque horam.” (St. Matt. 25:13.)

“Watch ye, therefore, because you know not the day nor the hour.”

Blessed is the soul that thinks often of the last hour, when all must be ended in this life; joy and sorrow, honour and despite.

Happy the soul that is as a poor pilgrim travelling towards God, which despises all the pomp of this world, how great or alluring soever. For in that last hour all shall perish, castles, cities, villages, vessels of gold and silver, all delicate meats, and varied cups of perfumed wines.

Then shall be mute, lyre, trumpet, pipe and harp.

Then shall be no more sport nor mirth, no more dance nor shouting, no more songs nor merry laughter, no more the cry of revelry in street or bower, for the hearts of all living shall wither away, and the whole earth tremble in the presence of God.

Oh how wise is he who meditates daily on these things, and who prepares, by tears, for the enjoyment of blessings to come, and eternal joy.

2. Blessed is he who separates himself voluntarily from the many snares and perils of this world, and from all that may flatter his sensual appetite.

Blessed is the pilgrim who, in his exile, weeps, and mourns, and desires to be dissolved, and to be with Christ in the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed is the man that hates the world, and all that is therein that would allure him to sin; and who flies, like Elias, to his monastery in the desert, from the face of numberless dangers, which often drag down the unguarded soul to hell.

Blessed is he that watches day and night against temptation, and who cries out with the prophet Elias, "It is enough for me, Lord, take away my soul," (3 Reg. 19:4); for it is better for me to die in thy grace, and when my heart is full of trust in thee, than to live in this world, surrounded by so many dangers, a witness to evil; for so long as the soul is united to the body, and the body is nourished with the produce of earth, man cannot be exempt from all sin, nor free from temptation, nor assured that he may not fall.

It is then to be deceived greatly, and to err like a fool, only to desire to live long here below, and to purpose to do many things there, when he knows not where he shall be on the morrow.

3. Remember, ye rich and powerful, ye who are girt with so many enjoyments, what will become of you, when you are dead and buried in the earth? what will all those riches which you possess avail you?

A king to-day, you live and reign; to-morrow you shall be no more, and your voice shall be heard by no one.

To-day you sit upon a throne, vested in a pall of cloth of gold, to-morrow thou shalt be laid in the tomb, and shalt be seen no more.

To-day, crowds do thee honour at thy feet; to-morrow thou shalt be cared for no more.

To-day thou art magnified above all; to-morrow, neither riches, nor honours, nor cities, nor castles, remain to thee.

To-day thou art comely above other men, and numbered with kings; to-morrow thou art food for worms, and a stench in the nose.

As you came naked into the world, so, like a poor exile, thou shalt be borne to the grave.

For short is the end of all the pleasures and vanities of this world, and death and grief, and mourning and fear, is the lot of all.

Our Lord the Pope dies; the Cardinals die; and others succeed them, in their turn to die.

No one can be assured of life for a single day, nor obtain from the Pope the privilege of not dying; nor procure a benefice from which he can never be ejected.

It often happens that after having obtained favours and places, death comes unexpectedly, and takes all away, so that the supplicant comes from Rome, as poor and naked as when he first went to court.

4. We read in history of many who have lived long. “Such and such a one lived;” and so of others; but at last it is said of all of them, “and he died;” for “we all die, and like waters that return no more, we fall down into the earth,” (2 Reg. 14:14), from which we sprang.

What is our life but a short moment, a wind that passes away, a morning brightness which fades away, a traveller who retraces not his steps?

Like a flash of lightning which disappears in the twinkling of an eye, so shall ages disappear, and with them the kingdoms of the earth.

Reckon the hours, the days, the months, and the years of your life; and tell me whither are they all gone?

Thy days have passed away like a shadow; thy years like the spider’s web; the wind blew, and their works could not stand against it.

There is nothing lasting, nothing abiding on this earth, of which the body of Adam and of his sons were all fashioned.

5. Greatness, beauty, pleasures, all in the world, is full of vanity and frailty.

Then let not these attractions allure you, nor their despite overwhelm you.

The fairest colours fade in death, and the richest ornaments, decked with gold, silver, and precious gems, in the dark tomb are valueless.

In all your works, whatever they may be, wherever you go, whithersoever you pass, be mindful of the end of life, and of that last hour, which shall come when you think not.

Blessed is he, who, with the Apostle St. Paul, “desires to be dissolved, and to be with Christ; a thing by far the better” (Phil. 2:23) for us, than to remain a long time on the sea of this world, beat about by storms, a stranger to God, and ever in fear.

If you bear Jesus continually in your soul; if you love him sincerely; if every day you address your prayers to him; then shall you be full of trust, you shall enter into his kingdom, for he hath said, “where I am, there also shall my minister be.” (St. John 12:26.)

Blessed is the servant, who, at his last hour, shall deserve to hear those sweet words of Jesus Christ, “Well done, good and faithful servant, because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will place thee over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.” (St. Matt. 25:21.)

CHAP. XXVI

Of the eternal praise of God, and the desire of eternal glory

“Lauda, anima mea, Dominum.” (Ps. 145:2.)

“Praise the Lord, O my soul,” from whom cometh all good, and shall remain for ever.

Thus you ought to refer to Him all, as to the first beginning and last end of all good. You ought to praise Him with sentiments of utmost gratitude, in order that the gift of His heavenly grace may flow a new upon you in larger streams, and may increase in you, until you come to the fountain of life eternal, to the country of eternal charity; and to the beatific vision of His divine presence and glory.

There is nothing better or more salutary, more sweet or agreeable; more worthy, more exalted, more happy, more perfect, more blessed, than to love God most ardently, or to praise him without measure; and this I would tell you a hundred times, would repeat to you a thousand times. There is no study so fair, and no employment so noble, as that of loving and praising God, your Creator and Redeemer, with all your heart, with all your spirit, and with all your strength.

Do this while you have life, and being, and intellect; let His love and His praise be the only object of all your discourse, and of all your actions, night and day, at morning, and mid-day, at every hour, and every instant.

2. Give yourselves wholly and purely to Him; unite yourself to Him as strictly as your strength and knowledge permit; in all, before all, and above all, love Him, bless Him, praise Him, celebrate Him eternally, and the happiness you shall taste in Him shall have no end.

Exult, O faithful soul, in the Lord your God, as Mary rejoiced in Jesus Christ her Saviour.

Exult and praise thy God, who has made and redeemed thee, for to God you owe all those many and inestimable benefits which you daily receive from his merciful bounty; for even were you a holy angel, your gratitude as such should still be beneath his goodness and infinite grandeur.

Praise Him nevertheless, thank Him with the weakness of a mortal man, who has need of His mercy, and who ever seeks and implores it continually.

Cease not to pray to Him and to praise Him, and if you should fall into sin, and your offences be multiplied, despair not, but rather humble yourselves, and pray with more fervour.

Love, and you shall be loved; love purifies the soul from all past faults; cleanses and cures all its wounds—enlightens the spirit—inflames the heart—dissipates sadness, and begets joy in the heart; such as the world knoweth not of, and flesh and blood can never feel.

Praise God, and you shall be praised; bless Him, and you shall be blessed; sanctify His name, and you shall be made holy; magnify Him and you shall be made great; glorify Him, and you shall be glorified by Him in soul as well as in body.

3. The Soul.—But when shall these things be? when wilt thou open my mouth, to sing thy praises for ever with thy saints? when wilt thou fill my heart with joy, my soul in gladness with thy saints in glory?

The Lord.—Wait yet a little while, when the trumpet shall sound, you shall see great wonders; then shall I give to my saints, in recompense of their pains, and labours, rest and life eternal,—what wish you more?

The Soul.—Absolutely nothing, O Lord; Thou alone art enough for me, my God; Thou who givest life eternal, to those who love and praise Thee; Thou who renderest goods, vast, inestimable, and eternal, for what is valueless and perishable.

The Lord.—Give then thyself to God, and all that you have; give Him all that you have done, all that you have of knowledge or strength; and ye shall be richer, and dearer to Him than you ever yet have been.

Say with St. Paul, that “we are as having nothing, and possessing all things” in God (2 Cor. 6:10); poor afflicted, despised, in the eyes of men, but rich and “always rejoicing” (1 Thes. 5:16) in the Lord, and sure of receiving our reward in heaven. (2 Tim. 4:8.)

The Soul.—O Lord God, the salvation of my countenance, and my God! when shall my soul enjoy in thy kingdom the gracious light of thy countenance? Oh! when wilt thou enlighten all the darkness of my spirit in the splendour of eternal light?

O true peace, supreme blessedness, perfect felicity, when wilt thou take possession of my heart, and chase away all that would turn it from Thee?

O Lord, when shall I be able to follow Thee, free from all hindrance and restraint; and go wherever Thou shalt call me?

When shall I be able with mine eyes to see Thee, without a glass, without out a riddle, without a parable, without a figure, without uncertainty, without the doubts, and discussions, and questions of the learned.

When shall it be given me to understand all the truths which I believe in thy Holy Scriptures, and which the doctors of thy Church explain in their writings and their lessons; all that has regard to my God, to His angels, and to all the choirs of angels, the glories and beatitudes of heaven, and come to the peace, and joy ineffable of the heavenly inhabitants?

When shall I be there? when shall I be able to enjoy thy blessed presence; to contemplate thy glorious countenance, and the brightness of thy glory, with the cherubim and seraphim, and all the saints?

But the hour is not yet come; the gates of heaven are yet closed to me; wherefore, O my God, my heart is afflicted; and my mouth uttereth groanings, as long as I tarry here, and until I come to Thee, my end.

CHAP. XXVII

Of the praise of the Holy Angels in Heaven

“In conspectu angelorum psallam tibi.” (Ps. 137:1.)

“I will sing to thee in the sight of the angels.”

1.

Oh King most High, God to be praised supreme!
Maker of all that live, angels or men,
How long, how long still must I dwell on earth,
Apart from Thee, and all the blessed throng
Who circle round thy throne in heaven's light!
How long with man, still shall I eat the bread
Of toil and sorrow in this vale of tears;
How long deprived of that angelic food,
That heavenly manna that fulfils the soul!

2.

Once exiled in the Isle of Patmos, Lord,
Thy holy apostle John the concert heard
Of blessed spirits, who, in union, thrice
Sang, Holy, holy, holy, Lord of Hosts.
Oh would to God, that I were one with them
To hear the like, and add my voice to theirs!
Oh! were I joined to them, what happiness!
How would I sing with them! oh I desire,
With lively yearn to join my praise with theirs,
To glorify with them, above the heavens,
And celebrate through all eternity
Thee, and the greatness of thy holy name!

Oh Cherubim and Seraphim, how sweet,
How fair and glowing, and how grand the song
Of joy, ye sing before the throne of God.
These never tire, nor languish, nor distaste,
One and the same throughout the eternal years.

3.

Oh when I think of the eternal years,
Glory and bliss that knows no change nor end;
When I reflect how day and night the song,
To the adored and glorious Trinity,
From angel voices universal springs,
How rude and harshly grates the voice of man,
What discord in their choicest harmony,
What dearth of song, and sweetest melody.
Their music instruments, when best discoursed
Charm not mine ear, nor touch my heart; I see
But sadness in their joy, fatigue in mirth,
In delicate meats, insipid nothingness,
Beauty of form is but incarnate frailty;
Wormwood their delicate wines; their honey, bane;
Their mirth and chosen pleasures, bitterness;
Their grandeur, poverty, at best ornate
With fast corruption—vanity and smoke,
Pass with their honours, and most dear-loved glory.
Beauty and grandeur fade away, and tell
Their birthright is to fade—their object base!

4.

But when I raise my heart above and hear
The canticles sublime of heaven's court,
My feeble intellect cannot digest
The depth of beauty, might, magnificence;
Wherefore with heart all sighs, and soul fulfilled
With self-contempt, before thy throne, O God,
I prostrate fall, and humble me to men,
Thy mercy, Lord, beseeching—all I do,

Or may have done, is nought, but what thy grace
And mercy have suggested to my will,
Which thou abundantly on all hast poured,
In numberless times, and with unmeasured love!
Wisdom and depth of God! how deep and vast
Thy righteous judgments to the end of time,
These, on the good, and on the wicked fall,
On grateful as on thankless hearts—devout
As on the wicked! Who can penetrate
O God thy secrets, who may e'er complain,
If in thy will unsearchable, events
Fall not, as we unknowingly desire?
Oh be thou blessed, God, eternally!

CHAP. XXVIII

A prayer of the devout lover of God

“Dirigatur, Domine, oratio mea, sicut incensum in conspectu tuo.” (Ps. 140:2.)

“Let my prayer be directed as incense in thy sight.”

I desire, O Lord my God, in every place, and at all times, to join thy saints, and all thy creatures, in devoutly praising and blessing thee; in publishing thine infinite perfections; in loving Thee perfectly, in glorifying Thee without ceasing, and in exalting the greatness and glory of thy holy name for ever: for thou, O Lord, thou art my God, and I am thy poor servant.

For thou art my light and my hope, O my God; thou art my strength and my patience, my praise and my glory, O my God.

Thou art my wisdom, my prudence, my beauty, and all my sweetness, O my God!

Thou art my music and harp, my organ and timbrel, O my God!

Thou art the psalm that brings gladness to my heart, my hymn, my canticle, and my song of joy, O my God!

Thou art my casque and breastplate, my bow and my sword, O my God!

Thou art my treasure, my gold and silver; and the talent with which I am to pay all my debts, O my God!

Thou art my dwelling-place, my fortress, and my palace, O my God!

Thou art my shield and banner, my tower of strength, and the defence of my life, O my God!

Thou art my garden and orchard, my bower of green, and cool retreat, O my God!

Thou, my refectory and table, my meat and my drink, O my God! for all that is not prepared and seasoned by thee, seems to me stale and flat, O my

God!

Thou art my aromatical plant, and balsam of sweetness, my spikenard and choice myrrh, and most precious ointment, O my God!

Thou art my rose and lily, my wreath and garland, O my God!

Thou art my dormitory, and my bed, my napkin and covering art thou, O my God!

Thou art my light and my lamp, my lustre and star that enlightens me, O my God!

Thou art my book written within and without; my Bible, in which all the Holy Scripture is contained, and the teacher who gives me understanding, O my God!

For in Thee I find all things, and all that I have is through thy mercy and goodness; and I feel that all that I seek, or all that I desire out of Thee, is of little or no profit to my soul!

Open then my heart to thy holy law; “restore unto me the joy of thy salvation;” (Ps. 50:14); enlarge my heart that I may run in thy ways; confirm me by thy words, for thou alone canst help me, and lead me to eternal life.

O Lord, my God, hear the vows I address to Thee, in joy, in tribulation, in health, or sickness, I commend me into thy hands, and desire to bless Thee for ever and ever. Amen.

CHAP. XXIX

On union of the heart with God

“*Convertere anima mea in requiem tuam, quia Dominus benefecit tibi.*” (Ps. 114:7.)

“Turn, O my soul, into thy rest, for the Lord hath been bountiful to thee.”

For verily He is thy rest, and thy peace, thy life, thy salvation, and thy happiness; all, therefore, that you do, all that you see, all that you hear of that is good, refer all to the glory of God, that so you may have peace and a good conscience.

Put not thy trust in thyself or others, but cling to God alone, purely, steadily, entirely; dwell with Him who giveth and worketh all in all; by the might of his goodness, and the greatness of his mercy.

Oh, who will give me grace to refer all to the praise and honour of God? with all my strength to do all the good that I am bound, or am able to do; to be so insensible to the vanities of earth, that none of them, whether great or small, shall be able to draw me from Him; to turn me away from his service, to overcast my soul with trouble, or in anywise to hinder me!

But, perhaps, it is not possible for me to obtain such a state in this life? Oh, say not so, for all is possible to God, and he can, instantly, by the sweet cords of his love, unite the devout soul to Himself; for this, the pure and perfect love of God, can so act in a moment, whensoever it pleases Him, that forgetful of all creatures, the soul may be wholly united to Him alone, and vehemently enflamed, yea melted, by the fire of his love.

Oh, my God and my love, when, in this place of exile, shall I be wholly united to Thee? when shall I love Thee with all the strength of my soul which thou hast given and graciously infused?

May all created beings keep silence before Thee, O my God! Speak thou only to my soul, O God, blessed eternally! assist it, help it, enlighten it, thou

that art all in all, and whose brightness is above the stars of the firmament!

Happy is the soul which, being afflicted in this world, is comforted of God; which, being unknown to men, is known to the holy angels; neglected by the wicked, but sought after by the good; despised by the proud, but loved by the humble; separated from the children of the world, but united to the servants of God; scorned by the great, but honoured by the little ones; dead to the world, but alive unto God; afflicted in the flesh, but rejoicing in spirit; weak in health, but strong in mind; downcast in countenance, but upright in conscience; burthened by toil, but strengthened in prayer; bent under the weight of infirmities, but raised up again by interior consolations, and prisoned in this world by the bonds of the flesh, but in spirit rapt to heaven, and joined with Christ.

Blessed is he who has Jesus and Mary, the angels and saints of God for his friends in this life; for guides on his way; for advisers in doubt; for masters in his studies; for readers at his table; for companions in his solitude; for familiars in his conversation; for fellow-singers in choir; for guards in danger; for help in trials; for defenders against his enemies; for intercessors after sin; for props in his last hour; for comforters in his agony; for advocates in the day of judgment; for patrons before God; and for welcomers to the courts of heaven!

O religious and devout soul, who hast forsaken the world, thy family, and home, receive now God for your father; Jesus for your brother; Mary for your mother; the angels for your friends, and your fellow-religious for your relations.

Look on all the faithful as your neighbours, the old men as your uncles; the young men as your brothers; the married women as your mothers; the young maidens as your sisters; the poor as your friends; the travellers as your cousins; the meek and humble of heart as your companions; the sober and chaste as your mess-mates, the sick and afflicted as your familiars; the distressed and despised and scorned as the dear friends of your heart; the pious as those most worthy of honour; and all those who despise the world and serve Christ, as co-heirs with you in the kingdom of Heaven.

This is the holy generation and noble offspring, born of God, pleasing to God, founded on faith; and strengthened by hope; adorned by charity; armed with patience, proved by the fire of tribulation, and found firm in constancy.

CHAP. XXX

On True Peace, to be sought for in God alone

“Pax vobis Ego sum, nolite timere.” (John 6:20.)

“Peace be to you. It is I, be not afraid.”

1. In Christ Jesus is all salvation, and the true peace of the soul.

He that loves Christ, enjoys peace and rest in him—desires nothing out of him, nothing more than him.

The peace of the faithful soul consists in suffering for the love of God and in the name of Christ; and whoso thinketh otherwise, is in error, and deceives himself; you will only lose your time and trouble, if God be not the only object of all your desires, the sole aim and end of all your actions. “There is no peace to the wicked, saith the Lord God,” (Is. 57:21), but those who love thy law, O Lord, shall enjoy abundantly the sweetness of thy peace.

2. The peace which Christ taught and promised, is to be found in profound humility, in a complete denial of our own will, in the mortification of our depraved inclinations, in the contempt of worldly praise, and of all consolation in perishable and passing things.

Watch then over your heart within, lest you be seduced by its attractive deceit; and watch over your senses without, lest you seek for satisfactions that shall hurt your soul.

And yet created things often serve to our spiritual advancement, but it is when we refer the use we make of them directly and entirely to the honour and glory of God; when we use them with moderation and discretion for our own pressing necessities, or for the good of our own brethren.

3. But their beauty often becomes to us an occasion of sin, when we linger over with looks full of curiosity, of concupiscence, of passion; for it produces in our souls desires and affections which are contrary to the

purpose and glory of God; and often the unwary are overcome by evil, and fall, where the wise and good are watchful to preserve their virtue.

Remember that riches tempt, money corrupts, and pleasure stains the soul; that much feasting chokes it; knowledge puffeth it up; the love of power breeds self-sufficiency, and honours beget pride.

Perverse souls are disgusted with humility; and vain, empty praise seduces the light and unstable.

There is both folly and weakness in those who love and seek after pleasure, for it cannot satisfy the soul nor give the heart repose; for all that is of the world shall fail, and is of short duration; and nothing but God is perfect, and nothing but Him that we should regard as sovereign beatitude and highest good.

4. Keep watch then over attractive seducers, be they persons or things; beware, lest beauty of form, nobility of birth, or height of office, if you would not be deceived and lose the peace of your heart, and the purity of your soul. All things are vain, slippery, and hurtful, at least, if you do not refer all to God, from whom cometh all good, and in whom all things live and move, and be

Glory not then, O frail and mortal man, who in so many things art guilty, so prone to fall into sin,—so weak withal, and unable to stand in virtue; trust not yourself overmuch, nor be too confident in thyself or others, by high thoughts and vain presumption, but offer to God, without restriction or reserve, all the good thou perceivest, whether in thyself or others, or in any other created thing.

Then will you find in Christ that peace of heart, and sweet repose, which you will seek for in vain in creatures; then will be accomplished in you and of you, the sweet and holy promise of Christ on the mount, when he said, “blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God.” (St. Matth. 5:8.)

To Him be praise, honour, and glory, from every creature, now and for ages of ages. Amen.

CHAP. XXXI

On directing the intention to God

“Oculi mei semper ad Dominum, quoniam ipse evellet de laqueo pedes meos.” (Ps. 24:16.)

“My eyes are ever towards the Lord; for he shall pluck my feet out of the snare.”

In all thy thoughts, words, and actions, have ever a right and pure intention towards God, that so you may do all things to his praise, honour and glory, and to the edification of your neighbour. For God is the source of all good, and the great giver of eternal rewards; and if you would not lose the fruit of your labours, He alone ought to be the beginning and sole end of all your good works; and if you were fully penetrated with the terror of God’s righteous judgments, vanity would never take possession of your hearts. Vanity is a most deadly poison to your souls; and he that loves to have his praise rung in the world, shows an excess of vanity, and gives a most certain sign that he is filled with pride, and not with the grace of God.

What then will you do? or in whom will you place your trust? not surely in yourself, nor in man, nor in earthly creatures; nor in the stars of heaven; but in God alone, your Creator, who made and sustains you, as well as all created things, by the might of his right hand, and He needs none to help or support Him. Call out then, with the holy king David, “My eyes are ever towards the Lord; for He shall pluck my feet out of the snare,” (Ps. 24:15), and add these words from another Psalm, “Lord, all my desire is before thee, and my groaning is not hidden from thee.” (Ps. 37:10.)

Renounce then the deceitful consolations and counsels of men, and fly in thy need unto thy God; place all your trust in him; call upon Him in fervent prayer and holy desires, for “He will pluck thy feet out of the snare, so that

you be not moved out of the way” of virtue and true humility, and persevere steadfastly in the service of God unto the end.

Every good work done for the sake of God, maketh the conscience glad, brings light to the mind, and meriteth a greater increase of grace; but every bad action brings sorrow to him that commits it, stains his good name, and hinders the influence of divine consolation.

He that doth any thing through motives of vain glory, puts out his light with the wind of ostentation; and he, who is virtuous that he may please men, and stand high in their esteem, shall quickly be overthrown by an angry God, and grovel in the mire

Rejoice not then, like fools, in the smiles of the world, but rather let the sense of your own frailty keep you in the fear of God. But let the frequent falls and errors which you so readily commit, teach you to think humbly and meanly of yourself.

Beware of giving too much praise to any man in this life, for you know not what he may become hereafter; neither rashly condemn him that falleth; for touched by his tears, God may shortly grant him grace to rise again.

But pray for all men, and commend all unto God.

Be vile in thine own eyes, so shall you be great in the sight of God, who has respect to the humble, but knoweth the proud afar off, and suddenly shall cast him down.

If men despise you, and esteem you less than your brethren, be not cast down into the excess of sadness; it is better and safer, doubtless, to be humbled by men, with the meek and simple, than to be cast off by God with the rich and the lofty-minded.

Shun the praise of men; fear to be exalted; blush, if honours be conferred on you; fly from human respect; strive rather to hide yourself, and prefer, before all the service of God, the study of holy books, and perseverance in prayer.

That man is not without praise and honour, who, for the sake of God, despiseth praise and honour; nor is he without consolation, who holdeth all the joys of this world as nothing, and who gladly endureth every thing that is contrary to his inclination, for the love of Christ, and whose daily breathing is to be united to Him in heaven.

CHAP. XXXII

The prayer of a humble and contrite spirit

“Ad te, Domine, levavi animam meam,” (Ps. 24:1), “qui habitas in cœlis.” (Ps. 122:1.)

“To thee, O Lord, have I lifted up my soul,” “who dwellest in heaven.”
O Lord, my God, who wisely and most well,
Angels and men, and all created things,
On heaven or earth disposest, hear my sighs,
And in the place of praise, and thanks most due,
Accept the straights and anguish of a heart,
Mourning in true contrition for its sins,
Now offered up to Thee, suffused in tears!
Turn all its evil into good, and bless
The fruitful with a goodlier increase:
The more thy name to glory, and promote
The everlasting safety of my soul!

Thou knowest, Lord, my frailty, and how great
My lack of light,—how oft my memory
Unstable turns away, and here and there
Wanders among the hills of vanity,
So oft apart from Thee, too far apart:
Yet by thy many mercies, spare me yet,
And bring my wandering footsteps back to Thee!
Possess my heart, O Lord, and night and day,
As far as human frailty lets, by prayer
Devout, or meditation’s holy aid,
Sleeping or waking keep it warm in Thee!

Yet would I watch continual, to appease
Thy loving countenance by holy gifts,
And fervent prayer, but more by those three mites,
All I can give—a widow's mite—these three,
A contrite heart—lips to confess my sin—
And satisfaction by my humble works!

Oh! Lord, my God, Thou who art sovranly good,
And to be loved supremely, Lord my God,
Have pity on my lowly misery!—
No holy angel I, but weak frail man,
No innocent lamb, but one who sins in malice;—
Not one, who with a glowing heart all fire,
Thee contemplates continual—but cold
And icy—a distracted worshipper—
I am not fit to be thy servant, Lord,
I am unworthy to be vowed to Thee,
To bear the stamp of virtue on my front,
And seeming what I am not, give the lie
Within this sin-stained heart, to virtue's name!

God of my soul! deign to receive my prayer,
Hear when I cry to Thee, humble and low,
Here from the depths of grief I call, and Thou,
Who ever dost within thy heaven of love,
Pleasing, receive the angels' jubilee,
And harmony unanimous of praise
From countless spirits that surround thy throne
Continual ascending! hear the prayer,
That from a broken and a contrite heart,
Beseeches help, where help alone is found!

Albeit my falls are frequent—thou art God!
My weakness chills me, and my footsteps slow
To tread thy paths of justice—Thou art God!
Though thick temptations press, and shadows cloud
The atmosphere around—yet Thou art God!
And though thou crush me, I shall not despair,

Of pardoning mercy still, for—Thou art God!

Oh! I shall never cease to praise thy name,
And bless Thee, God! till, from this earth set free.
Thou call me home, to join the angel throng,
Whose only joy is ceaselessly to raise,
To Thee, one Catholic chord of voiceful praise!

CHAP. XXXIII

Of holy fellowship with Jesus and with his saints

“Quæsite Deum, et vivet anima vestra.” (Ps. 15:6.)

“Seek ye after God, and your soul shall live.”

Nothing is more profitable than this; nothing shall bless thee more; for he that seeketh any other thing, shall end by finding nothing.

If, therefore, thou wouldst have a friend to give you true consolation in affliction, go to Jesus; approach His crib with the shepherds, (Luke 1) come with the magi, to adore Him in the arms of his mother; (Matt. 2) follow Him to the temple, with Simeon and Anna; (Luke 2) to the city, with Martha; (Luke 10) to the sepulchre, with Mary Magdalen; (John 20) or filled with sentiments of the most sweet and lively joy, join the apostles in the upper chamber, to receive with them the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2)

Blessed is he, that in these places, and elsewhere, so seeketh Jesus, not in body only, but in spirit and in truth.

Blessed is he who, at all times, and in every place, seeketh Jesus from the bottom of his heart, and who burns with an ardent desire to enjoy his presence, and to prepare himself every day for the bright vision, and presence of Christ.

Blessed is he who, in his life, follows Jesus to Calvary, and bears his cross with Him; for his divine Saviour shall assist him in his last hour, and he shall not have to fear that sentence of reprobation, which shall fall so heavily on sinners.

2. Seek not only Jesus, but the disciples of Jesus, and all that love Jesus; and to please Him, bear patiently the pains and sorrows of this life; for the

love of Jesus maketh a man despise the world, and driveth away all that is impure or vain.

Renounce then those friends, those acquaintances, those companions, who would hinder you from living in solitude and devotion, and for your singular consolation, in secret retirement entertain thee with the holy apostles, and brethren of Jesus, that they may speak to you of the kingdom of God, and declare to you how great is the happiness of the elect; and how, by passing through the fire of many tribulations, you may attain to such a blessed end!

Come then, before all holy saints, men or women, citizens of the heavenly court; withdraw thee, from the tumult of the world, and come into the secret tabernacle and oratory of the blessed Virgin Mary, and seek there, by prayer, for the consolations you stand in need of.

Listen to the angel of the Lord, who there announces to Mary the incarnation of Christ, and the redemption of the human race.

O blessed day and happy hour, if thou canst rest there in company with the angel Gabriel, and the blessed Virgin Mary, and learn from their mouth the mysteries of heaven; believe, most firmly, all things which were declared by the angel to Mary, even as she believed God, and Him he sent from heaven.

Then turn to the desert, and seek diligently John the Baptist, the precursor of our Lord Jesus Christ, where he lies hid; prostrate yourself, humbly, at his feet, and say with much devotion:—

“Hail, John, the most holy and beloved friend of Jesus Christ; I have often heard of thy virtues, and of thy admirable life; I have heard of many great and holy wonders concerning thee; I have heard of the miraculous sanctity of thy birth; I have heard with what religious austerity thou livedst in the desert from thine infancy, that so thou mightest preserve thy spotless purity in word and thought.”

Ask of him how long he remained alone in the desert, and dwell with him there as long as you can, or your time will allow.

Learn of him what was his meat or his drink, and who ministered to his wants; see if his father or mother sent any thing to him; or when they came to him, or he to them; or whether the angel Gabriel descended on him to reveal to him many hidden things, or even whether Jesus appeared in person

to him, and strengthened his hand, as it is written in the gospel: “For the hand of the Lord was with him.” (St. Luke 1:66.)

Whatever verity there be, in regard to these particulars, in the life of St. John the Baptist, yet commit thyself wholly to the Holy Spirit, with whom he was filled, by whom he was instructed, who formed him, and adorned his life with all virtues; who, in the desert, in the world, in prison, and in chains, watched over him, and received his soul at last, as it bore the fresh palm of martyrdom.

5. Approach ye then to the apostles of Christ, seek out St. Peter, and follow him to the temple to pray, or ascend with him into the upper chamber, “to receive the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 2)

Follow St. Paul to Damascus, to Ephesus, and go with him to preach the gospel of Christ, not in body, but in spirit.

Behold how his labours exceed all; how often he prays, and how frequent, in his prayers and meditation, he is rapt up into heaven.

It is true these great favours are not granted to all; and yet the apostle, who had received them, says, “I do not count myself to have apprehended;” (Phil. 3:13,) and elsewhere, when he teaches the humble, that they ought to conform themselves to the life and passion of Jesus Christ, he says again, “I judged not myself to know any thing among you, but Jesus Christ and Him crucified.” (1 Cor. 2:2.)

Follow, then, St. Paul, for he will lead you by the straight path (of the cross), and by the way of the cross to heaven.

Go then further, and in the parts of Achaia, listen to the apostle Andrew, preaching the faith of Christ; hear him in the words he addressed to the cross on which He was nailed, for the name of Jesus Christ; engrave them on your heart, and study to fulfil with joy, through the inspiration and assistance of the Holy Spirit, all that he declares to you of the passion of Christ, and the praises of the holy cross.

Seek then St. James the Greater, who suffered the death of martyrdom under Herod; drink, with him, of the chalice of sorrow in this miserable life, and bear patiently with all suffering, for the love of God, and the salvation of your soul.

Next proceed, and seek John, the beloved apostle of Christ, who, for the name of Jesus, was sent into exile; and separated from the world, and all its cares, and concerns; where, enlightened by divine revelation, he wrote in

symbolic and mysterious style in the Apocalypse, the state of the church militant and triumphant; and after this, he wrote his gospel, to instruct and console all churches, and all the faithful therein, and give testimony, last of all, to the divinity of Jesus Christ.

Read and study well these, and the other books of Holy Scripture, as much as your understanding will allow, and your wants require in this, your exile, here on earth, not with a view to pass for wise and learned, in the eyes of men, but that you may become meek and patient, humble and obedient even unto death.

Go also, and for your consolation seek the other apostles, whom you will find employed in the service of God, enduring martyrdom for the faith and love of Christ, and leading the faithful to virtue, both by their example, and by their words.

Behold St. James, the brother of our Lord, writing his canonical Epistle, wherein is contained the rule of a Christian life, and the whole perfection of our religion.

Seek St. Thomas in the Indies; that apostle who reverently touched the wounds of Christ, and who, believing firmly, cried out with an ardent love, “My Lord and my God.” (St. John 20:28.)

With a like holy zeal, seek the holy apostle and learned evangelist Matthew, writing, in the Hebrew character, the gospel of Christ, for the instruction of all the world, and for the salvation of all people, and nations, and tongues.

With an equal ardour and affection, follow the other holy apostles and disciples of Jesus Christ; each one, in their several relations and places, preserving the word of life, teaching the people, and labouring unto death in the vineyard of the Lord!

Behold these are the saints and friends of God, who, at the price of their blood, and by the crown of martyrdom, merited eternal life, and deserved to enter into heaven. Read gladly the recital of their labours and sufferings, and you will be consoled in your labour and light affliction; for whatever you do or suffer for your salvation, it is as nothing in comparison with that which the martyrs and all the blessed have done and suffered for Christ in the service of God.

CHAP. XXXIV

On placing your sovereign good and farthest aim in God alone

“Satiabor cum apparuerit gloria tua.” (Ps. 16:15.)

“I shall be satisfied when thy glory shall appear.”

1. The soul.—O Lord, how shall man attain to this glory?

Jesus Christ.—By the contempt of himself, and all earthly things, and by an ardent love of all heavenly things.

The saints who rejoice in heaven, and all the faithful who still combat here below, against the allurements of sin, these are my witnesses for this.

But those who are far from attaining the eternal glory and sovereign beatitude, are the proud angels of darkness, the infidel Pagans, the perverse Jews, hardened heretics, and carnal men, who, seduced by the pleasures of the world, neglect the service of God, and propose no other end in all their actions, than the enjoyment of earthly goods, the honour and esteem of men.

Ah! woe is me. O God, for such are driven about in every sense, in painful journeys, in severe study, in constant watchings, solicitous without ceasing, and labouring without relaxation, to increase and preserve those enjoyments which make them slaves to their desires; and when they have received a part of what they thirst for; when they have obtained directly or indirectly the object of their labours, still are they not satisfied; they wish to rise still higher, for their vanity will leave nothing below them; they puff themselves up, and think themselves wise and worthy of the esteem of man; and to receive the homage of their brethren. Howbeit in all this, what is there but vanity, frailty, and nothing; whatsoever they desire, whatever they

seek, is lost for the great work of their salvation, and full of danger to the welfare of their souls.

In very deed you are in error and deceive yourselves, ye who in the world find sweetness, ye for whom this present world is full of pleasantness; for none of these enjoyments are secure to you, and every day you draw nearer to death, and to the judgment of God.

For there is nothing in this world but what has annexed to it somewhat of bitterness; whatsoever of loveliest, best and sweetest, created things can offer you. These cannot satisfy the soul; they cannot deliver it from evil; they cannot fill it with good, nor keep it in endless joy; God alone, who is eternal, immense, and sovereignly good, God can alone produce in us these blessed effects.

For He is the creator of all things, visible and invisible, of angels and men,—before all—above all—and in all—God blessed for ever.

Can the blessed spirits in Heaven, or those on earth, think or speak worthily of Him? Ah no! for He is above all that a created being can conceive, and in His sight all things are vain and valueless; and the soul deceives itself, when, apart from God, it fosters those affections, which would turn it away from the love and honour of God, but which will leave it at the end in poverty and abject indigence.

Prayer.

Great are Thy works, and wonderful, O God,
That no created being, far less I,
Can fathom these, or understand Thy ways!

Far from the reach of my weak intellect,
Thy truths extend,—Thy wonderful decrees,
Beneath a veil lie hid; nor angel-like,
Can I Thine august count'nance contemplate.
What shall I do, O God,—low in the dust,
I shall with deep humility confess
Myself unworthy of Thy least regard,—
Unworthy of the heavenly happiness;
Unworthy I, to share in saintly joys.—
Here before Thee, and in the sight of men,
I shall lay low my pride and shall become

Vile and to be dispised, and Oh! mayest Thou
Have pity on a wretched sinner now,
Now and for ever, Lord! have mercy still.

In bitterness of soul, I will recount
My years defiled in sin, fueled for wrath;
Henceforth my groans shall burst, my tears shall fall,
To Thee whom tongue, and ears, and every sense
So frequent have offended, still offend,
Though Thou hadst granted me the use of earth,
Thee solely, and with all my heart to serve,
With all my soul to love, until life's end.

Oh when I look upon the depth of sin,
In which my soul, foully and tainted long,
Lived on in unconcern, let not despair
Come to add increase to the vast amount,
But while with tearful eyes I meditate
The heavy load, still let me forward look
On that exhaustless mercy, endless love,
And infinite goodness, I so oft have felt,
And feeling turned away; hear my resolve
Still while I meditate on Thee, my God!
Until returning, aided by Thy grace,
I may near Thee attain the port of peace,
And come with joy into the haven of rest!

From every evil, Lord, deliver me,
Which may approach, to crush or turn away
For some deceitful good, my soul from Thee,
And contemplation of Eternal good!

God of all mercy! help me; by Thy aid,
Now may I walk for ever in thy sight,
And may I never err nor go astray
Henceforth from Thee, who art the sovereign good.
I can find happiness in Thee alone!
Oh grant thyself to me, and with thyself
Salvation to my soul.—Then shall all thoughts,

And all desires, be satisfied in Thee! Amen.

APPENDIX

No. I.—p. 89

CAP. XVIII.—De æternâ laude Dei.

“Semper laus ejus, in ore meo.” (Ps. 33) O dulcis vox in auribus devotorum, sed dulcior in præsentiâ Dei, et sanctorum Angelorum. Si omnia organa musicorum canerent, et laudem Dei non resonarent, in vanum concreparunt, nec animam sanctam recrearent, neque satiarent. Oportet enim, quod Deus et honor ejus sit causa canendi, et omnis vanitas sit exclusa, si laus debet esse Deo grata et accepta. Si intentio tua fuerit pura, tu poteris exultare in vera cordis lætitia cum Maria.—(Luc. 1)

Dulcis symphonia in cœlo, et in terra, laudare Deum pura corde, et consonâ voce, cùm omni creaturâ, prò sua immensa bonitate, et excellenti magnificentiâ. Delectabile opus, laudare Deum in omni tempore, diligere Creatorem cœli et terræ, honorare maximè æternæ vitæ largitorem. Siquidem Sanctorum Angelorum vita, honor, et gloria, laudare Deum totis præcordiis, et nunquam à laude cessare qui nunquam possunt fatigare, nec inaniter gloriari. Hoc etiam agunt sanctorum animæ, in cœlesti patriâ, liberatæ de vinculis corporum, de laqueis Satanæ, ab omni tentatione ejus securæ, et jam Deo unitæ in perfectâ charitate, et perenni lætitiâ; et ineffabili beatitudine repletæ. Recogitant modò liberæ cùm maximâ dulcedine, in quantâ fuerunt tribulatione, et amaritudine, et quanta evaserunt pericula, et tentamenta hujus miseræ vitæ. Versa sunt eis omnia lamenta in cantica lætitiæ, et dura verbera in augmenta pulchrioris coronæ. O quam beata illa patria, ubi pacata sunt omnia, tristitia nulla, omnia jucunda, divinâ laude, et dulci jubilo;—Benedic ergo, et tu anima fidelis, Dominum de cœlis, lauda Deum tuum, Sion, (Ps. 144) gravata pondere carnis. Invoca sensum in loco certaminis, ut adsit tibi a dextris tuis, et sinisteris cum Angelis sanctis. Ora, ne prævaleat contra te dæmonum impetus, ne decipiat te mollities carnis, ne frangat te rigor ordinis, aut labor

corporis. Suscipe pro Christi amore, onus sanctæ cruris, quæ aperiet tibi portam regni cœlestis. Quid amplius capis? Via regia veniendi ad Christum, est vincere propriam voluntatem, sustinere defectum, non quærere carnis commodum. Habebis certè æternam requiem pro parvo labore, æternum honorem pro humili statu, et infirmo loco. Sit ergo semper laus Dei in ore tuo, in prosperis, et adversis; multum enim in hoc potes promereri, si plenè te resignaveris ad voluntatem Dei. Quicquid gravitatis tibi occurrerit interiùs, aut exteriùs, hoc accipe piè et gratiosè de manu benignissimi Creatoris, qui curam gerit de omnibus nobis, pusillis et magnis. Qui te fecit ad imaginem suam, non relinquet te in necessitatibus tuis, propter immensam bonitatem suam. Aperi, ergo, os tuum in laudem Dei omnipotentis; cujus providentiâ reguntur omnia in cœlo, et in terrâ, in mari, et in omnibus abyssis. Lauda Creatorem tuum, qui te fecit hominem, et non bestiam; et si te muscam fecissit, adhuc laudandus esset, et bene fecisset. Non potest leo gloriari de fortitudine suâ, contrà muscam et culicem; quia si leo potest altiùs clamare, non tamen potest tam altè sicut musca volare, Ne ergo sit contentio inter magnum et parvum, inter divitem et pauperem, inter fortem et debilem, inter sapientem et simplicem, inter regentem et servientem: omnes pariter laudemus Dominum Deum nostrum, qui creavit omnem creaturam, mirâ pulchritudine, et varietate, ad laudem nominis sui et gloriam, et hominum utilitatem largiter et apertè demonstrandam. Lauda anima fidelis Redemptorem tuum, qui te redemit de manu æternæ mortis, per passionem suæ Benedictæ Cruces. Cui dignè regratiari non poteris, etiam si millies pro ipso mori et crucifigi posses. Lauda Protectorem tuum, qui te a multis periculis, et peccatis custodivit. Lauda, Benefactorem tuum, qui tanta beneficia tibi tribuit, quæ vix enumerare sufficis. Ecce adhuc quotidie, nova dona tibi transmittit, et per se etiam ad te in altare venit, in quo optimum donum, quod ipse est et habet, tibi ad communicandum præbet. Nihil aliud pro his à te requirit, et tam gratum habet; nisi ut ipsum purè et intimè propter se ipsum, ames et laudes. Cùm fueris lætus, et benè tibi successerit, lauda et gratias age; quia pius Dominus te consolari dignatus est, ne in viâ deficias. Nam toties, panem de cœlo, tibi ad refocillandum spiritum tuum mittit, quoties verbum Dei audis et legis, ac de incarnatione et passione Christi devotè meditaris. Cùm fueris tristis, aut debilis, lauda, et gratias age; quia Deus te visitat; probat, et purgat, ne superbias, et de te præsumas. Afflictio enim, corporis, sæpe est reductio ad

compunctionem cordis. Cùm fueris sanus et fortis, lauda et gratias age; quia Deus dedit tibi vires, ut labores, et aliis servias, et tempus nunquàm otiosè expendas. Cùm fueris in horto, vel in pomario, videns diversas species, et arbores, flores, et rosas, pyra, poma, herbarum virores, et lilia odorifera, lauda, et gratias age; quia ostendit tibi Deus, multa mirabilia opera sua, in terrâ germinantia, quæ omni anno, renovat mira potentia, ac sapientia sua, pro magnâ suâ bonitate, et hominum utilitate. In omni ergo loco, et tempore, lauda Deum, et gratias age: quia plena est omnis terra majestate ejus, et super cœlos gloria ejus. Lauda Deum cum omnibus sanctis in terris, quem laudant omnes angeli in cœlis. Si laudas, angelis assimularis; si non laudas, ingratus es, et pejor bestiis. Ecce volucres cœli cantant, pisces natant, canes latrant, pecora clamant; et omnia elementa ad laudem Dei se movent, et magnificentiam Creatoris sui, naturalibus motibus demonstrant. In cunctis, ergo, quæ agis, habe Deum præ oculis tuis; cave offensas: gratias age, pro beneficiis impensis, et in fine cujuslibet operis tui, corde tenus regratiando Deo, sic conclude: Deo laus, nunc in æternum. Omnis spiritus laudet Dominum. Amen.

No. II.—p. 226

CAP. XXVII.—De laude Sanctorum Angelorum in cœlo.

1. “In conspectu Angelorum psallam tibi.” (Ps. 147) O Rex altissime, Deus summè laudabilis, Creator omnium rerum, Angelorum, et hominum; quamdiu morabor in terris, et elongabor a te, et ab omnibus angelis tuis in cœlis? Heu me pauperem et infelicem, quamdiu manducabo cum hominibus panem terrenum, panem laboris et doloris, et privabor pane angelorum, continente omnis saporis suavitatem? (Sap. 16)

2. O Domine, quando audiam vocem laudis tuæ, ex ore Angelorum tuorum in cœlo, sicut Beatus Joannes Apostolus, relegatus in exilium audivit vocem multorum angelorum, psallentium in unum, sanctus, sanctus, sanctus? (Apoc. 14) O utinam essem unus cum ipsis, et talem vocem haberem! Quàm libenter vellem te laudare cum eis, et super omnia altissima cœli cantica, cantare et magnificare nomen sanctum tuum in æternum! O cherubim, et seraphim, quàm dulciter, quàm pulchriter, quàm ferventer, et excellenter, cantatis et jubilatis coram Deo, sine omni tædio, sine fatigatione, sine cessatione in æterna felicitate!

3. Ideò omnis vox humana, est mihi rauca, omnis cantus dissonus, omnis psalmus aridus, omnis musica gravis, omnis cithara surda, omne organum mutum, omnis mundi lætitia grandis tristitia, omnis lusus ululatus, omnis cibus et potus insipidus; omnis caro, fœnum; omne vinum, fel, et acetum; omne mel, venenum; omne jucundum asperum; omnis decor, fœtor; omnis ornatus, stercus; omnis honor, et gloria, vanitas et fumus; omne pretiosum et nobile, vile et deforme; imò omnia nulla, comparatione æternæ vitæ, æternæ gloriæ, æternæ lætitiæ, in conspectu Dei et Angelorum; qui altissimè collaudant sanctam et gloriosam Trinitatem die ac nocte sine fine.

4. Sed quia ad ista sublimia cœlorum cantica ascendere nequeo, nec plenè ea comprehendere sufficio; ideò meipsum plango, et valdè despicio; et coram Deo, et omnibus hominibus flecta genua mea, et humiliter veniam peto. Nam opera mea verè nulla sunt, sine gratiâ et misericordiâ tuâ, Domine, quam maximè ostendis, super omnem creaturam tuam sine numero et mensura. O altitudo divitiarum sapientiæ, et scientiæ Dei (Rom. 11) Quam profunda sunt judicia tua, et vera à sæculo, usque in finem sæculorum, super bonos, et malos, super gratos et ingratos, super pios et impios; ità ut nemo possit plenè investigare opera tua, nec debeat justè conqueri in aliquo facto improviso. Benedictus, ergo, semper Deus meus.

No. III.—p. 251

CAP. XXXII.—Oratio humilis, et contriti spiritus.

“Ad te Domine levavi animam meam, qui habitas in cœlis.”

1. O Domine Deus, qui omnia providè ac justè disponis in cœlo, et in terrâ, cum Angelis, et hominibus, et omnibus creaturis tuis; accipe pro magnis laudibus, et gratificationibus tibi debitis, omnes tribulationes, et angustias cordis mei, in verâ contritione peccatorum meorum, tibi modò oblatas. Converte mihi omne malum in bonum, et bonum semper in melius, pro gloriâ nominis tui, et animæ meæ æternâ salute. Tu scis omnem infirmitatem meam, et magnam ignorantiam meam, et quotidianam instabilitatem memoriæ meæ; quàm citò vagor huc illuc, longiùs a te sæpissimè. Parce mihi Domine, secundum multitudinem miserationum tuarum, et reduc me citius ad te. Conserve cor meum apud te, in devotâ oratione, et sacrâ meditatione, die ac nocte, quantum mihi est possibile in hoc fragili corpore.

2. Cupio placare benignissimam faciem tuam, muneribus sacris, et precibus, et præcipuè tribus pauperum oculis, contritione cordis, confessione oris, et satisfaction humilis operis. Domine Deus meus, summè amabilis, memento mei pauperis; quia homo sum fragilis, non Angelus sanctus: peccator magnus, non innocens agnus; tepidus orator, non fervidus contemplator, Et ideò, nec dignus servitor tuus: nec inter devotos oratores debeo computari, nec videre, nec nominari. Domine me charissime, accepta sit, tibi, humilis oratio mea, et amara contritio peccatorum meorum, pro dulci cantu, et jubilationis Angelorum, et concordì laudatione omnium cœlestium civium supernorum. Veruntamen non despero, nec desperabo de veniâ, et misericordiâ tuâ; quamvis sæpius cado, et gravor in meipso, ex infirmitate meâ. Non cesso, nec cessabo à laude tuâ, in vitâ meâ: sed laudabo, et magnificabo te, donec ad te perveniat, (ô Deus) anima mea. Nam te semper laudare, et super omnia amare, summa felicitas est Angelorum, et beatorum in patriâ.

No. IV.—p. 271

CAP. XXXIV.—Juxta finem.

—— Magna et mirabilia opera tua Domine; et cogitare et perscrutari singula, non est mihi nec alicui creaturæ possibile.

4. Quid igitur faciam, quia non possum altiora capere, nec secreta cœlestia penetrare, neque cum Angelis faciem Dei mei contemplari? Indignum me fateor tantis bonis frui, et cum sanctis in cœlo conversari. Ideò me, semper humiliabo, et despiciam coràm Deo, et omnibus hominibus, quamdiu fuero, et ero vilis in oculis meis; ut Deus misereatur mei peccatoris, nunc et in omnibus horis. Recogitabo omnes annos meos, in amaritudine animæ, quibus iram merui; et placabo in gemitu et fletu Deum, quem offendi sæpius verbis, factis, visu, auditu, et cæteris sensibus meis: quos mihi ad serviendum sibi dedit in toto corde meo, quamdiu in corpore vivo. Sed ne desperem, et dejiciar in malis meis, recordabor, (Domine) omnium bonorum tuorum, et omnium misericordiarum tuarum, quæ a sæculo sunt, donec ad te, auxiliante gratiâ, tuâ merear salvus pervenire. Libera me ab omnibus malis irruentibus subito in me, quæ retrahunt sæpius cor meum à cœlestibus bonis meditandis. Adesto mihi, pie Deus, et pone me juxta te; ne incipiam vagari et elongari à summo bono, quod tu es,

Domine; nam in te solo, totum bonum meum. Da te ipsum mihi, et sufficit animæ meæ, Domine Deus salutis meæ.—Amen.

THE SOLILOQUY OF THE SOUL

THOMAS A KEMPIS

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CONTENTS

THE SOLILOQUY OF THE SOUL

INTRODUCTION

PREFACE BY THOMAS À KEMPIS

THE SOLILOQUY OF THE SOUL

I OF THE LONGINGS OF A SOUL SEEKING GOD

II ON THE STRICT JUDGMENT OF GOD

III ON GRIEF AND WEeping FOR SINS

IV ON LAMENTATION FOR NEGLIGENCE

V ON THE SHORTNESS AND MISERY OF THE PRESENT LIFE

VI ON LONGING FOR ETERNAL LIFE

VII ON THE WISH FOR A HAPPY DEATH

VIII OF THE DEAD TO THE WORLD, WHOSE LIFE IS IN CHRIST

IX ON SEPARATION FROM THE CREATURES

X ON CONTEMPT OF EARTHLY CONSOLATION

XI OF GREAT SWEETNESS AND CONSOLATION IN GOD

XII OF SEEKING THE SUPREME AND ONLY GOOD

XIII

OF THE UNION OF THE SOUL WITH GOD, AND THE WITHDRAWAL OF GRACE

XIV

OF THE SOUL'S SORROW WHEN GRACE IS ABSENT

XV

OF THE SEARCH FOR THE BELOVED

XVI

OF THE PROTECTION AND LONG-SUFFERING OF THE BELOVED

XVII

OF THE ANSWER OF THE BELOVED, AND HIS WITHDRAWAL

XVIII

OF CONFIDENCE IN DIVINE MERCY

XIX

OF LONGING FOR DIVINE ENJOYMENT

XX

OF THE SOUL'S LONGING FOR GLORY

XXI

OF THE REMEMBRANCE OF THE HEAVENLY COUNTRY

XXII

OF DRAWING NEAR UNTO CHRIST, THE HOLY OF HOLIES, THE KING OF ANGELS

XXIII

OF BEING THANKFUL FOR BENEFITS

THE SOLILOQUY OF THE SOUL

INTRODUCTION

ALTHOUGH the world wide popularity of the “Imitation of Christ” has somewhat thrown into the shade the other works of Thomas à Kempis, no apology is needed for the publication of a revised edition of the “Soliloquy of the Soul.”

Its authorship has never been disputed, and internal evidence—perhaps the best amid the interminable disputes on the subject—unhesitatingly decides that the “Soliloquy” and the “Imitation” are by one and the same hand. They are, as Dean Milman observed, more than kindred in thought and language. The same spirit of exalted piety and of fervent devotion, making use of the sublime imagery of the inspired writers of the Old Testament, is conspicuous in both works.

If there are not in the “Soliloquy” so many of those “brief quivering sentences” which take such hold of the mind as to be fastened without effort on the memory, there is in it that utter abandonment of the soul to God which places the book in the first rank of religious meditations. Whatever may be the modern estimation of the value of monastic life, there can be no question of the necessity for frequent communings of the soul with itself at all times and in all seasons. Little fear, indeed, is there in these days of too much abstraction from the busy and restless world around us. The danger which threatens us with every fresh invention for the mitigation of human suffering, and for the increase of national comfort, is that the inner and spiritual life of man will be more and more starved and neglected.

There is an unity of design in the “Soliloquy,” which among all the works of à Kempis makes it especially attractive to the reader. The author’s design that such of the chapters may be chosen (to use his simile like we cull plants in a garden) as are suitable in time of need for the refreshment of the heart when overcome by weariness, may no doubt be followed with great advantage. But to thoroughly appreciate the grandeur and beauty of the work, it is necessary to read the chapters in their consecutive order—to be

with the author through the valley of lamentation and of the shadow of death, and in his earnest pleadings for the divine spirit, until he intones the grand anthem of thanksgiving at the end. The absence of all attempts to interpose any mediation of man between the soul and God is most noticeable throughout. It breathes forth no intolerance, nor is there any trace of the scholastic theology which had led to such interminable disputes in the then Christian world. Although written by a monk, there is wonderful little trace of the influence of monastic life. Indeed the struggles, and as it were wrestlings, with the divine presence for a revelation of the inner spiritual mysteries, might have been penned by a devout Christian of any age, who being in the world, yet not of the world, sought to fill up the void of personal religion. "It is the soul of man working out its own salvation, with hardly any aid but the confessed necessity of divine grace."

One of the earliest translations of the "Soliloquy" into English was by Thomas Rogers, published in London in 1640, under the title of "A Spiritual and Heavenly Dialogue betwixt the Soul of Man and God." It appears, doubtless owing to some confusion of the compilers and translators, as the fourth book of the "Imitation;" but by all the innumerable commentators of à Kempis, the "Soliloquium Animæ" is spoken of as a separate work. Great pains have been taken with the present edition to reproduce the author's meaning with fidelity; and while two chapters have been omitted as not in consonance with the culture of the English Church, it is believed that this new issue of the "Soliloquy of the Soul" will enable many earnest and devout Christians to satisfy some spiritual cravings, and realize what community of heart and mind there has been among the saints in all ages.

PREFACE BY THOMAS À KEMPIS

FOR my own comfort I have gathered together into one little book certain devout sentences, which I had a mind to store up in my heart, and which I have arranged as it were like a delightful garden planted with various trees, and decked with beautiful flowers, in which I may sometimes enter to cull and gather matter suitable in time of need for the refreshment of my heart when overcome by weariness, or cast down by sorrow.

And that I might at all times readily find out under what tree it would suit me to rest, or what flower it would be most pleasant to choose, I have marked the several heads of the discourse under as many titles. And as to the form of the discourse employed—now speaking, now disputing, sometimes as praying, sometimes as conversing; now in my own person, now in another's; I have so turned the text that it may run in an easy style.

2. I ask then my readers not to be angry with the author, because he has chosen so to frame this discourse with himself. I would have them pardon also want of elegance in composition, and the simplicity of diction, thinking to myself that it is not those things which are full of art, but the simple and the pure, that have the sweetest odour before GOD. But if anywhere my meaning appears somewhat incomplete or not very clear, I beg the pious reader to correct the same, assuring him, that if anything irrelevant be found here, it is the result of inadvertency, and not of design.

Moreover, since all human judgments, however fair they may seem, may yet be liable to be deceived, I, a suppliant disciple, have recourse to Thee, O Omnipotent GOD, and FATHER of lights, and offer Thee this soliloquy, to the end that Thou mayest approve what is worthy, and reject what is faulty, and show me or some other faithful servant how Thou wouldst have that which is displeasing more correctly and clearly set forth.

3. I entreat Thee also, Holy FATHER, grant me, the least of Thy servants, an enlargement of time and opportunity for tarrying in the most plentiful pastures of the Holy Scriptures, which are and ever shall be my dearest

delights, until the day of Eternity dawns, and the shadow of mortal life declines.

Remove then far from me all unprofitable cares, temporal loves, hurtful passions, and all other causes that keep me from my coveted rest: for free and tranquil should that mind be which longs to meditate on things inner and Divine. And to the end that I may be enabled to attain such a frame of mind, deign to pour out upon, and fill me with the blessing of Thy heavenly sweetness, that what I speak may tend to Thy greater glory, and to the increase of the grace of spiritual consolation for myself.

THE SOLILOQUY OF THE SOUL

I

OF THE LONGINGS OF A SOUL SEEKING GOD

“BUT it is good for me to cleave steadfastly unto GOD.”

O! brief and pleasant words embracing GOD, and excluding all the world.

What more can be said, what more desired? Is it not enough if that be done which has now been spoken?

And if others, yea, many other words are uttered, can they not be all included in these? Say again, therefore, my soul, with the Prophet, It is good for me to cleave steadfastly unto GOD.

Oh! my GOD, Thou art my only good, Thou alone art good and precious. To speak of Thee is sweet to him that loveth Thee; to think of Thee pleasant to the devout, whose heart is not in this world, but hidden with Thee in Heaven; so that Thou mayest be his only true repose, and inner sweetness, and he be not daily tormented here, where false desires allure. My GOD, how is it with him at heart, who burns with love of Thee.

What joy is his, whom no vanity of creatures delights! Does not his voice speak in the Psalm, the words of which were but now on my lips, when it says? “Whom have I in Heaven but Thee, and whom have I desired on earth beside Thee?”

Oh! holy, devout soul, hanging upon GOD, what is this I hear from thee? What is it that thou sayest? Do all things in Heaven and on earth appear little in thy sight?

2. “Yea, small indeed are they.”

What then seekest thou? and whom desirest thou without these? and where wilt thou find Him without them? Hath He a name, or place, or habitation where He may be sought?

Where is the place of the habitation of His Glory, of which thou hast sung, saying: “O LORD, I have loved the beauty of Thy House, and the place of the habitation of Thy Glory”?

Answer me, I pray thee. For if thou canst point Him out to me, I will go with thee, and we will seek Him together, and thy GOD shall be my GOD, and it shall be well with us, when He shall have been found and holden fast by us.

3. “What is this,” the soul saith, “thou askest of me, or why dost thou pry into aught such with me? Thinkest thou that I am able to speak such things?”

“Nay, if charity inclines me to speak, do not the rareness of the subject, and the depth of the secret prevent my revealing them? Why askest thou me? Ask those who have seen and heard Him; for behold they know Who He is Whom thou seekest. But rather ask Him, Who knoweth all things.

“For He it is of Whom we converse, Who will better manifest Himself unto thee, and show far more clearly, where He dwelleth. He it is, Who teacheth man knowledge, and giveth His grace unto the humble.

“Draw near then to Him, Who revealeth Himself, whensoever and to whomsoever He pleaseth; for without Him none can reveal Him unto thee.

“He alone can disclose to thee the joy of those that love Him, and that far beyond aught thou canst learn from me.”

4. And now why speakest thou thus, holy and humble soul?

Think not I would draw out of thee what, perchance, ought not to be known, or is not permitted thee to tell.

Let thy secret remain with thee; be thy door closed upon thee: let the seal of fidelity be unbroken, and the veil not removed from the sanctuary.

Eat holy bread in the holy place, within the tabernacle of thy house; ascend to the upper room; enter the wine-cellar of the eternal King—or what is better, and sweeter far—the chamber of thy heavenly Bridegroom.

I know it is written: “It is not meet to take the children’s bread, and cast it to dogs.” I know and have read this.

But see what follows, and pity me according to her word, who said, “The dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from the Master’s table.” Hide not then from me the words which I crave for; but out of the fulness of thy inner sweetness send forth at least one spark of burning love.

Give but one little drop of precious wine: shed forth even the slightest odour from that most costly ointment, that I also may taste that, of which

the best part is known to thee, and is so oft thy best consolation.

5. Why delayest thou? Satisfy my eager longing, and open thou the door to a friend knocking now for the third time.

Speak, beloved of the Beloved, yet despise me not. If thou canst not speak of Him, as He is, tell as best thou canst.

For to speak of Him, as He is, who is sufficient, and who could understand one so speaking? Therefore if not as He is in Himself, tell at least what He appears in thee.

Break forth and proclaim what good He hath done to thee?

For who shall discover what He is in Himself? Thou canst not, as thou hast confessed and admitted, saying: "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it. Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit?"

If then thou canst not penetrate thy own spirit, which the Creator and Quickener of all spirits created, how shalt thou fathom the Uncreated?

Didst thou not then awe-stricken say: "O LORD, who is like unto Thee"? Yet admit me, I pray, to some similitude of Him, Whose essence thou hast not yet attained unto. For it is hard thou shouldst deny a part, to whom thou thinkest not meet to reveal the whole.

6. "I profess (says she) that thou art too inquisitive and importunate with me.

"Thou searchest all that is mine, and puttest thy hands on the secrets of my couch. I sent thee to Him, and again thou comest to me. Seekest thou me, or Him?

"But I ask of what spirit thou art. Be still, I pray, and trouble me not—for He Whom thou seekest is far above me."

7. And I said, shall he that seeketh GOD so easily be still?

Thou that canst give me so speedily consolation, protract not this suspense. How long keepest thou my mind in doubt?

"As thy soul liveth, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." For a blessing it will be, if thou wilt show Him unto me. Now then, if thou hast seen Him, tell me plainly, and I will take fast hold on Him.

8. Again she replied. "I see thou art earnest in thy desire, and full of love for the Creator. Yet thou demandest a hard thing of me, and I know not whether thy wishes can be granted. He Whom thou seekest knows full well that it is not mine to tell thee this. Thy search is like that of the Bride in the Canticles, 'Show me Him Whom my soul loveth.' Thou wouldst learn from

me who He is, and what good He hath done unto me. Both, however, are my secrets.

“And still thou art not content, nor kept back by His greatness, Who excelleth the heavens; nor cast down by my littleness, who am as nothing in His sight. Why hast thou laid this burthen upon me?

“For it is a task beyond me to declare until I enter the sanctuary of GOD, and understand. Why pressest thou to know what I cannot speak?”

9. And I said: And still thou wilt not, and I so earnest. “Yea beyond all things, for I joy in gaining a deeper knowledge of things which are with difficulty unfolded.”

Do not, I beseech thee, be so hard as to be silent altogether. Fear not that I shall betray these things to enemies. I will keep them for friends, yea, for thy chosen friends.

Thou mayest without fear speak to me in the solitude of thy silence. Lo! we two are here alone.

I do not seek in vain curiosity, nor in arrogance, but in Him alone, Who hath caused us to put our trust in Him, of Whom also we now speak.

But if He Himself come in upon us, we will give Him place, and He shall be in the midst of us.

And if He vouchsafe to speak, willingly will we hear and keep silence. And thou wilt not then be bound to answer my requests, for when He speaketh all flesh must be silent before Him.

10. And she answered, “It is a good compact. Only let Him be with us, and we be borne unto His secret chamber. Let Him be the guide of our lips, and conduct us whither He pleaseth.

“Hear then thy Beloved, Whom thou seekest so diligently, is such and so great that He cannot be expressed in words, in that He is ineffable.

“So high and far exalted above all creatures, that He is for ever incomprehensible. His power and greatness are infinite. Whatever is spoken or written of Him, is alto-together unworthy of Him, since He is above all.

“The Heavens said: He passed through us, and ascended up on high, and prevailed over us. Earth answered: If the Heaven of Heavens can not contain Him, ask Him not of me. The stars sang—We are darkness and not light, if He shine not.

“The sea trembled and said, He is not in me, and the deep knew Him not.

“Hearest thou what these say? I hear and am troubled; my lips trembled at their voice. What then shall be done, if we ask Himself? Let us enquire of Him. O LORD, art thou He, of Whom the men of old have spoken, and Whom all things in their seasons serve?”

11. “I am that I am, and besides Me is none other.”

I am the first and the last, creating and governing all.

“I live, saith the LORD, because I will live for ever and ever.”

12. What sayest thou now, little worm, that art girt about with so great a light?

Behold thy Beloved, Whom thou thoughtest with me, speaketh to thee.

He was with me, when I said to Him, “It is good for me to cleave steadfastly unto GOD.” He will be with thee if thou also sayest: “My soul refused comfort, and I coveted not the day of man: but in Thee, O LORD, will I trust, for Thou art my King and my GOD.”

Thou must not be like inconstant lovers, but as one clinging to one alone, seeking one alone, who admits no rival from without.

Let then thy converse be with Him alone; and if He depart, sit as a widow patiently bearing all things. For this is His manner to go, and return, to prove His beloved, and make her perfect in love.

Let not His absence trouble thee, when thou longest for His approach. Wait, wait still; for a while He will go, in a while return.

For all this love effects, which now raises the soul to the highest, now sinks her to the lowest depth.

13. His love is most gracious; sweeter is it than all flowers, whiter than lilies, more bright than dazzling gems.

His love is above that of all created things, and therefore for love of Him are all these to be despised.

Touched by His love, my heart so burned within me, that turning away from all creatures, I prayed only for His most chaste embraces; and like as it were burning coals from a fiery furnace, I poured forth words, alas! unwont to many. What is there, I said, in Heaven, and what wished I on earth beside Thee, GOD of my heart, GOD my portion for ever?

Understand now what and how great thy Beloved is, and how incomprehensibly He transcendeth all things whatever.

And although He is ineffable, and beyond all thought, because infinite; yet is He very lovely, engaging, affectionate, easily entreated, so that,

though He cannot be understood, He can in a wonderful manner be loved.

For by love He is reached, by love retained; by longing He is sought for,
by prayer constrained, and by patient waiting won.

If I have not yet satisfied thee, may He Whom thou soughtest satisfy thee,
and teach thee better than all others how to find Himself.

II

ON THE STRICT JUDGMENT OF GOD

“LET my heart rejoice that it may fear Thy Name.” My GOD, Thou art very lovely, but very terrible also. Let him that loveth rejoice; and him that loveth not, fear. Whoso neither feareth nor loveth, is foolish and mad.

For it is a fearful thing to fall into Thy hands. And who for fear can tell the power of Thy anger? or who shall stand in Thy sight in the coming Judgment Day?

Because as the roaring of a lion is Thy voice, and Thy sword as a shining fire.

At the sound of Thy voice all the inhabitants of the world shall be moved, and the foundations of the earth shaken when thou comest. Who then shall not tremble, or how shall any escape Thy hands? If a man hide himself beneath the strongest rock, Thou shalt thunder, and its strength shall be rent asunder. And if he hide in caves or mountains, he shall be, drawn forth, to abide the anger of Him Whom he strove not to appease.

2. Verily there is no place where man can be concealed from Thy face.

For all things are naked and open to thine eyes: Thou piercest also the inner parts of man, and knowest his most subtle thoughts. Nothing secret then is hidden from Thee.

Oh! how terrible wilt Thou be to sinners and to the hard of heart, who now boast when they have done evil, and glory in basest deeds, and say —“The LORD doth not see, neither shall the GOD of Jacob understand.”

They are so puffed up with vain words, as if Thou wast not about to come; and they turn away their eyes that they should not see the end. But Thou wilt come in an hour when they think not, and they will be taken in the snares of their own iniquities.

And as thieves and robbers are put to confusion, when taken, so will they be confounded when their day shall come.

Thou wilt put them to shame who now mock Thee, and wilt recompense their wickedness unto them who have hated Thy Righteousness.

Now they are deaf to Thy voice, but the day will come when they will cry, and none shall hear. They now turn Thy word into a fable, but then they shall be turned into fire. For Thy word shall go forth with a terrible blast, and strike without pity the ungodly and unbelieving.

3. What then will the proud, and they that are puffed up with knowledge and swollen with power, say? What answer make, when the last trump shall sound, when Thou, O LORD our GOD, shall appear in majesty with Thy angels and archangels? Then will all the unjust scoffers of Thy word be dumb, and they shall be troubled on every side who feared not to persecute Thy devout servants.

Then will they be confounded with great confusion who made shipwreck of conscience and goodness of life, and gave themselves up to vanity and pleasure. Then shall they be punished who have given the reins to the flesh. Then shall they cry aloud to Heaven, who now joy in music and the dance. Then whatever hath been won through immoderate joy, shall all be changed to grief.

Then shall they be bound together to be burnt who have been companions in drunkenness. And those whom love knit together in sin, the avenging flame shall then punish.

4. Oh! foolish and hapless ones. O mad and blind lovers of the world, what do ye, and mean?

How will ye escape the anger of GOD?

Why for a little pleasure which ye love, haste ye to eternal torments?

Have ye no horror of hell, ye who shrink from a little penance?

And ye who quiver at the death of the flesh, why be ye not in instant prayer against the eternal death of the soul? For unless ye be converted and repent, ye will not (when GOD judges) escape these fearful evils, and fiery torments. I tremble as I think of the last day and hour; when GOD may no longer be entreated in prayer, but be the just Judge of all.

Holy GOD, Holy and Mighty, Holy and Merciful SAVIOUR, deliver me not over unto bitter death, but grant me a season for repentance, that I may worthily lament my sins ere the life of this world faileth me.

III

ON GRIEF AND WEEPING FOR SINS

“MY sin is ever before me.” My GOD, I have stained my life with many sins, but see my tears which I pour out before Thee on account of them. For Thou knowest that in me dwelleth no good thing; and as long as I bear this mortal body, I am not free from sin.

Therefore do I evil and sin daily, and what is far worse, I allow many to pass away without sorrow and worthy contrition. For so intent am I, and engrossed with outward things and vain curiosity, I cannot return quickly enough to salutary tears.

Hence the darkness of my sins is so deepened, and the fountains of grace obstructed, nay, the channels of divine consolation closed.

And is this a light evil?

It is in truth a great one, my GOD; and the more grievous since it passes so quickly from my heart, and pierces me with no sorrow.

2. O LORD, wilt Thou not look on me? How long shall I delude Thee, and deceive myself?

How long wilt Thou keep silence, O LORD?

Where is Thy rod? Where Thy goad and staff? Why withdrawest Thou the judgment and hell from my eyes?

If these were ever before me, thinkest Thou I should act carelessly? Is it for the sake of my amendment that Thou thus showest long-suffering?

But if I neglect it, wilt Thou not afterwards severely punish, if not here, assuredly in the life to come? For no sin, small or great, shall go unpunished.

Oh, far better is punishment here, where weeping is fruitful, labour short, satisfaction more acceptable, reconciliation easier. Spare not then the rod, but anoint my eyes with salve, however smarting; nor defer my punishment

to the last, lest I be delivered over to the tormentors to pay the uttermost farthing.

It is better now to be galled a little here but savingly, than hereafter to endure such bitter pangs. Therefore would I now mourn, and grieve bitterly for my sins. Ay, many have I to weep for, and none to make me smile. Darkness of heart, a slippery conscience, lapses into vice, neglect of grace, urge, nay often compel me from my needs to weep and mourn. And when I think of the diverse temptations and assaults of sin, what cause is there for mirth? Spare me, O LORD, spare me. No wonder is it, if touched by grief within, I weep, for it is the time for weeping.

Happy hour! when sorrow for sin springs up within me. Blessed the tear which floweth from the vehemence of contrition, and falleth on every stain of the heart.

3. And who can fully explore this abyss, and lay bare without fear the hidden pollution of the heart.

My GOD, True Light, Thou canst illumine all the darkness of my heart, and burn out all its stains in the spirit of ardour and judgment. It is Thine to give a new heart, to create a clean one, and therein to prepare a secret dwelling, that it may be Thy resting place, and a Tabernacle of Thy Name, Who art a lover of purity, and the guest of a good conscience.

But because Thou dost not willingly visit a neglected house, and often turnest away from one denied by wicked habits, therefore I fear lest this should be my lot.

But do Thou mercifully and pitifully come to my aid to repair my ruins. Woe to him from whom in anger Thou hast departed, but peace to him on whom Thou hast descended, and with whom Thou remainest.

But as for me, a miserable creature placed in the midst of snares, and weighed down by the chains of sin, what other counsel and remedy of salvation have I but to uplift my contrite eyes to Thee, that haply my cry may be heard in the heavens?

For a polluted conscience can find no more saving remedy, than to offer up the sacrifice of a broken heart in prayer?

And how can pressing temptation be resisted, except unceasing prayer be poured out to Thee, and a man humble himself profoundly in Thy sight?

But who will give me this blessing to weep and pray as I ought? Whence can I gain humility, and so great abundance of tears? Doubtless from Thee,

LORD, with Whom there is mercy and plenteous redemption. Oh, LORD GOD, Giver of all grace, grant that I may worthily bewail my sins whether large or small, and at the same time unsparingly chastise all without excuse, be they manifest or hidden.

Let these things dwelt upon between me and Thee, so restore to me lost grace, that I may be prepared for better still, and brought nearer to salvation.

IV

ON LAMENTATION FOR NEGLIGENCE

“THINE Eyes have seen my imperfections.”

Ah! LORD GOD, what ever will become of me since I sin daily? How shall I thoroughly amend my life?

When will it be better with me? When shall I recover my strength? And when shall I conquer all things?

I am cast down in the deep. Thinkest Thou there is yet any hope of my rising again, of my amendment, further progress, and attainment of the end?

Alas! I have no hope in myself; would it were more firmly rooted in Thee. Great despair is come upon me, because my infirmity increaseth from long trouble, and I see no end to my grief and iniquity.

And If I say, now I will begin, behold, it is time, I will strive to the uttermost; sin forthwith stands at the door, the enemy rises against me, and evil habits hold me firmly, against my will.

See, O LORD, my despair and abasement, and all the distress that I suffer. Let Thy Right Hand be lifted up, and deliver me from those that have girt me round, for the fear of them is fallen upon me.

My strength is undone, and my courage hath failed. My arm is broken, and my sword cannot save me.

I see not to whom I can turn; and there is none to receive me—none to cure me. Thou alone remainest as my refuge; but my offences make me fear, and therefore am I held back.

2. I have sinned: Oh! pardon me. I am altogether, and very deeply penitent.

Do to me what seemeth right, but be gracious unto me.

Justly hast Thou deserted me. Justly hast Thou handed me over to the adversary.

Yet remember, O LORD, the work of Thy hands, and raise up that which is fallen; for of itself it cannot stand.

Give ear unto my groaning, and my deep need. Let not the distress and anguish of my heart be overlooked by Thee.

Look, O Merciful FATHER, on my captivity and imprisonment, my oppression and distress, and deliver me from the house of bondage, and of wretched slavery.

If man live for many years, what shall it profit towards his amendment? Who knoweth whether he will become better or worse?

For the progress and end of man are uncertain, and his final perseverance doubtful, because of the manifold attacks of sins, and the perils of temptation.

Many on their first conversion are pious and humble, but afterwards froward and rebellious. First fearful and devout, contrite and silent; but afterwards unbridled and dissolute, talkative, and watchful.

They who formerly checked their very thoughts, afterwards pay little heed to their words and actions; and thus every sin, not guarded against at first, becomes gradually worse. Who then should not walk in fear and be circumspect, since sometimes unhappy ends befall even the good and the modest? Who knoweth whether he be elected, and can endure all things?

3. All must be proved, and seeing then temptation is a fire, who is assured he will not be burnt? All must fear, and alike hope for the better, but none must rashly presume, or slumber in a shadowy hope.

Gold that is tried in the fire shall be saved, while the stubble is consumed.

Consider therefore, O man, of what sort thou art. The Heavenly Refiner shall “refine and cleanse the silver,” and purify the sons of Levi, i.e., all that serve Him.

He is not always gold, who seems so before men; nor he always stubble, that is thrashed with the flail, or counterfeit silver that is beaten with the hammer. Because GOD looketh to the intentions, and the heart, oftentimes working His wonders therein, where all is regarded by men as lost. Oh! LORD GOD, what joy can I have on earth, when I think of the uncertainty and weakness of everything under heaven. I know that Thou art good, and that Thy mercy endureth for ever towards them that fear Thee.

For Thy mercy and goodness are infinitely greater than all my iniquity.
And this shall be my comfort, so long as Thou givest me time for
amendment.

V

ON THE SHORTNESS AND MISERY OF THE PRESENT LIFE

“TEACH me the number of my days.” As long as I am in this world, I am not pure; and as long as I remain here, I am a poor stranger and pilgrim upon earth.

I brought nothing into this world, and I shall certainly take nothing out. Naked I came into it, and naked I shall depart. As a fleeting shadow, and as rain dried up by the wind, and as the remembrance of a guest of one night, I shall presently pass away.

All this present life is as one most brief night. Few and evil are my days, and in a little while they will be ended, and be as though they never had been.

When a man is dead, what but corruption remains? Who will ask after the absent dead, when living he was counted but as nought?

Short is the remembrance of man whether he be famous or obscure. But the just shall be had in everlasting remembrance, because when he dies, he will be for ever united to GOD, who dieth not.

Happy then is he who places not his trust in man, nor joys too much in the things or beauty of the world, but has his heart wholly fixed on heaven, since here below all is fleeting and vain.

Go, reckon up all from the beginning of the world even unto this day, and tell me, where are they.

And how long, thinkest thou, will those survive, whom thou seest or hearest? Say, then, of all, that “every man living is vanity.”

2. Oh life, poor and miserable! Life, frail and mournful! which good men rather endure than love. And though the wicked love it greatly, yet it lasts to them so short a while. Oh! all thou vanity of the world, when wilt thou be

ended? Verily the time will come when all the elect, who now oftentimes mourn that they are so far from the kingdom of CHRIST, will be delivered from the bondage of corruption.

Would that all this world might wither away from my heart, and the LORD my GOD, the immortal Bridegroom, might be my only sweetness.

Truly a deceitful and most bitter cup is the fleeting joy of this life. Let them drink who will, but grievous shall the future bitterness be. And the more thou hast been inebriated with it, the keener shall be thy pangs, for all the joys of this world will pass away swifter than the wind, and leave but pains and suffering behind for their votaries.

Away, then, far from me, thou deceitful glory of the world, and all foolish carnal delights.

Thou allurest and deceivest many, but leavest them at last sunk in destruction. Woe to those that trust thee, and are sunken by thee.

But come and be with me, holy self-denial and perfect contempt of all the pomps of the world; leave me not wholesome remembrance of my pilgrimage. What am I but dust and ashes? Whither go I but to the earth?

Oh! how wretched am I become, how justly sorrowful, when I look back on my pilgrimage, or look forward, knowing not how I shall end it.

If I live well, and so persevere, I need not fear an evil death. But who can boast of a good life, and a conscience void of offence? Whoso knoweth that he is such let him glory in the LORD, and pity me a poor sinner.

I joy not to live, because wretchedness presses on every side. An evil conscience makes me fear to die, because it cannot answer to GOD for one act of a thousand. Alas! How unlike to this fear is the word of the Prophet when he says, "My heart is ready, O GOD, my heart is ready."

3. O LORD GOD of my salvation, grant me a happy end to my life, and lengthen not the days of my mourning. In sorrow I came into this prison, and I shall not go hence without fear.

Long appears my life, it is constant misery and sadness that prolong it. For in truth it is not long; my days pass away swifter than the wind.

But to him that is in sorrow and sadness all time is long, and a day is as a year. Wherefore is life wearisome to me, and so much the more it afflicts me as I survey its distresses; and although there are moments of consolation and joy, yet I must consider whether they are from God or not.

If from GOD, I gladly accept them; but I know not how long they will last: still, however brief they are, they are most pleasing and truly delightful.

Would, my GOD, they were more abundant, and that such moments might not pass so swiftly away. But those which are not from GOD are worthless and will perish, pleasant and sweet though they may seem. And so this life passes away, with a mixture of good and evil. As long as I am here, it is as a poor stranger; I cannot say it is enough for me, for there is no fulness of good in this world; but Thou, in Whom I believe, art the Good for which I wait. When, then, Thy glory hath appeared and filled me, I will then confess that I am wholly satisfied.

Meanwhile, because this is hidden from me, manifold sorrow encompasseth my soul.

Mindful of Thy Holy Word, I often repeat within myself, “My soul is sorrowful even unto death.” Well were it for me if this hour had passed away, and no pain or grief were to light on me more.

But let Thy mercy, O LORD, I beseech Thee, preserve me.

VI

ON LONGING FOR ETERNAL LIFE

“BRING my soul out of prison.”

The violence of my grief suffereth me not to keep silence. For why tarry I so long here? I know not, for my progress is so slow.

Too slowly I advance; would to God I may not fall back. What a boon wouldst Thou give me, O LORD, if Thou wouldst speedily take me hence, lest it should be worse with me.

My life sighs for pain, and yet amends not itself in labours. If Thou waitest, I am not thereby amended, but rather abuse Thy long-suffering. If Thou correctest, I can hardly bear it, because Thou punishest dry stubble. Why then dost Thou not take away Thy servant? “Why cumbereth it the ground,” that is, why doth he dwell with the good, and amendeth not his life and conversation?

Why doth he take up the room of another better minded than him to his own loss, and demean himself so carelessly and lukewarmly? And in the bitterness of my heart, I thus confess myself in the Ears of my GOD.

2. But oh, good LORD, cry not in Thine anger against me. Cut down the tree, and cast it into the fire.

I lay bare my weakness before Thee, that Thou mayest pardon me when I confess. It is for me to accuse, for Thee to forgive. It is for me to weep and mourn bitterly, for Thee mercifully to comfort me in my tears. Either, then, LORD GOD, grant me greater grace in this life, or take me soon from the world, that the rent be not made worse. For to live long, and not to amend, is but to heap up punishment.

Nor can such a life, in which I make no progress, nor bewail my failings, please me; for whoso liveth holily and righteously, laments his failings, and

is ever longing to grow more and more in virtue and grace.

But what shall he do who perceives that he is falling back daily, and that the flesh rises against the spirit, yea, who sometimes, overcome by weariness, or becoming lukewarm through neglect of improving opportunities, gives over the combat, or casting aside his spiritual arms, follows the lusts of the flesh, and goes whithersoever his own will draws him.

Such, alas! O LORD GOD, draweth nigh to the gates of death, and, living in the flesh, risks the death of the soul. Oh, how greatly should every one dread the snares and seductions of the enemy! None is safe, none pure, but frailty is in all.

But do Thou, O LORD, Who canst do all things and knowest all things, raise up the broken heart, cleanse the unclean from every stain, and renew Thy SPIRIT within him, that all lukewarmness and coldness may depart, his spiritual fervour return, and Thy Love remain unchangeable to the end.

Whoso is weighed down by his own heaviness, needeth Thy help only. He cannot of himself cast aside the burthen of his sins, until Thou give grace from Heaven strong enough to burst the heavy chains of his passions.

Such grace, I pray, bestow upon me, for without Thy grace there can be no good life, nor life eternal attained.

While I live in the flesh, life gives me no consolation, nay, death is better than life.

Why? Because, by this life, I am kept far from the eternal, which cannot come till death destroys the present life, and death itself be by the same stroke destroyed.

Therefore my desire looketh upwards, and my heart, seeking eternal rest, deeply sighs, and says, "It is enough for me, O LORD, take away my soul," which Thou hast redeemed with Thy Blood.

3. Open the gate of Thy kingdom, and let in a poor pilgrim returning from exile unto Thee.

Hear me, O LORD, and loose me from the bonds of the body. What more shall I do here, who am profitable neither to myself or others?

Why then do I live, who am burthensome to myself, and wearisome to others? What will become of me, I know not. O LORD, if Thou hast provided something better for me, why are my longings hindered? I bow to Thy will, for it is good. But in myself I see evil only; wherefore to live in

the world is a burthen and weariness. For I daily sin, and add sin to sin, and repent not as I ought.

If then I were set free from this body of sin, and united with Thee in Thy Kingdom, I should sin no more, nor offend Thee any way, but should praise Thee for ever and ever.

Hitherto Thou hast borne with me, and shown all long-suffering. I acknowledge my fault, and that on account of my sins I may not enter into thy Kingdom, for nothing unclean shall enter into it.

But when shall I be without sin? when shall I be so fully cleansed as to fear no repulse, but rather hope to be welcomed gladly. Oh! if I advance not more fervently,—if I am not more watchful than I have heretofore been, I fear that my hope will be poor indeed.

But do Thou, LORD, Who wiliest not that any should perish, but that all should be saved, grant me increase of grace whereby I may amend my life; and give me the hope of heavenly things, with the spirit of inward sweetness.

Let not my heart be joyful after the flesh, but wait for death in holy fear.

Let no creature or earthly care keep me back, but let Thy wished-for Presence draw me on and comfort me. Blessed is he who waiteth for Thee, O LORD; but more blessed he who hath already departed from this wicked world, for he shall neither sorrow nor fear any more.

VII

ON THE WISH FOR A HAPPY DEATH

“THOU art my trust, O LORD, from my youth.” In this hope I flee to Thee for refuge, when my last hour and the time of my dissolution shall come. Oh that I were so well prepared, that I might die in this hope!

Oh that I had passed my last day with a happy departure, and laid aside this burthen of this flesh, how many dangers and fears should I then have escaped!

Happy is he whom Thou hast chosen and taken to Thyself, who having put off the body, has passed from this world to the FATHER—from exile to the Kingdom—from a prison to a palace—from darkness to light—from death to life—from dangers to security—from labour to rest—and from all misery to eternal bliss.

Happy is the soul which now enjoys its reward, rejoicing in Thee, the LORD its GOD.

But alas me! that my sojourn here is prolonged even until now.

How graciously and mercifully wouldst Thou have dealt with me, hadst Thou sooner called me hence, and suffered me to come unto Thee, that where Thou art I might be also.

Ah! if Thou hadst taken me sooner out of this world, ere I knew its defilements, and when I was afraid to sin even in small matters, what a boon wouldst Thou have conferred upon me. But now, by living longer, I have wandered further from Thee, and offended in many things.

2. Woe is me! what have I done? I have followed the passions of the flesh, given myself to vanities, deserted virtue, not kept innocency, have added evil unto evil, and oh! bitterness of grief, have experienced what I have read, “Woe to the wicked in his wickedness.”

Sluggish at length did I return; slowly I began; I hasted not in my progress; I was not fervent in advancement; I increased not in zeal; and what is far worse, became cold after former fervour.

Hence also I often feared to die, because my conscience accused me that I had lived not as I ought to have done. But often on account of the dangers of temptations, that the last error might not be worse than the first, have I longed for death, and said, Oh, that I had already died in grace, that I might not be afflicted with so many evils upon earth!

Oh, if GOD had deigned to have taken me away ere now, and had put an end to my labours, what a happy lot mine had then been! But all things are according to Thy will, O LORD. If Thou wilt that it should be as I ask, it will be done forthwith: but if otherwise, Thy will be done.

Thus do I pour forth my longings unto Thee, and the sorrow which I endure,—not as if Thou knew it not, but that thus I may receive some refreshment for my soul.

I know that I am not yet well prepared, for my conscience hath much to be afraid of.

And what wonder that I, a sinner, fear, since many even of the holy Fathers have been afraid, and Thy judgments are not as our judgments.

But how shall I prepare myself? It were well, indeed, if I were better prepared against that day, seeing I know not whether it will be to-day or to-morrow.

I will then more firmly strengthen my resolution, bewail my past neglects, offer myself wholly as a sacrifice unto Thee, and commit myself for ever to Thy mercy. O LORD my GOD! all my deeds stand before Thy mercy, and have no merit of their own, but through Thy boundless goodness and wondrous mercy. And this is all my hope and my stay.

3. But how is it with a pure and unspotted conscience? What saith the chaste and devout soul?

Come, it saith, LORD JESUS; come, and tarry not; lose the bands of my wickedness, break the chains, bring me out from the prison house, from the pit of misery, and from the mire.

Waiting I have looked for Thee; incline Thine ear unto me, and hear me. Leave me no longer in this world.

Be it enough that I have contended up to this present; that I have been an exile so long; that I have not been worthy to enjoy Thy presence, nor to

behold Thee face to face.

Now at length grant me that joy so long desired, which knows no end, and is clouded by no weariness.

Show me Thy face, that face which the Angels ever see; let Thy voice, which they hear without intermission, sound in my ears.

Come, LORD JESUS, and take me out of a strange land; recall the outcast to his native country, and restore the fallen to his former state.

Come, gracious Redeemer, make me partaker of Thy eternal glory. Time is it for me to return to Thee; time for Thee to commit my body to the dust from which it was taken.

I care not where it be placed, or how treated: only let the spirit be safe, and come unto Thee. Be it well with my soul, which I commend unto Thy hands: but may my body rest in hope, to be raised again at the last day.

For wherever it be laid, it cannot be removed or hidden from Thee. Take me away from among men, and unite me to the fellowship of Thy Saints; I am wearied of this temporal life, and have no pleasure but in the day of eternal brightness.

As I pass out of Egypt, let not the old serpent oppose me, nor the enemy bark at me in the gate; let not his image affright me, nor the fear of death disturb me.

But let Thy Holy Angels assist me by their faith, protect me by their strength, and gently, tenderly receive me, and lead my soul in triumph to the Heavenly Paradise.

May the glorious Mother of GOD, the Virgin Mary, and all the Heavenly host be there to help me.

And do Thou, holy, sweet, best JESUS, give me the joy of Thy countenance, and cast me not away from among Thy beloved Elect; but remember, O Son of GOD, that Thou hast redeemed me from the enemy by Thy precious blood.

Of Thy mercy and goodness receive me into glory; for with longings have I desired to eat this Passover with Thee. Oh! blissful day of my coveted reward! Oh! blessed hour of blest departure, how have I longed for Thee, and had Thee ever before my eyes! What harm now have tribulations and straits in the world done me?

How light the contempt, and labour, and humiliation endured for Thy Name's sake? Thou hast been my life, and now to die is gain; that I may

dwell with Thee in Thy Kingdom which is far better.

To Thee be praise and glory, Who art the life of the living, the hope of the dying, the salvation and rest of all that attain unto Thee.

VIII

OF THE DEAD TO THE WORLD, WHOSE LIFE IS IN CHRIST

“TURN away mine eyes lest they behold vanity.”

Oh! JESUS, true life—life that knows not death, grant me to be consumed with love, to be wounded with love, and out of love to die for Thee, so that the flesh may have no more dominion over me.

I am not yet wholly dead to the world, but the old man still lives in me, stirring up within me many dissensions, and evil desires: making my nights bitter, and my days wearisome.

Oh! when shall it be that I can with boldness say, “But I account myself as one that is dead upon earth”?

For he that is dead cares neither for the praises of men, nor the reproaches of the slanderer, in that he is dead. The dead in the flesh speaks not, smells not, tastes not, works not.

The vanities of the world fall not on his ear, nor do his eyes see what is rare and beautiful, nor aught that could tempt him to the love of anything worthless upon earth. And he who is dead to the world is not in the world, but in GOD, to Whom he lives; as Paul saith to his beloved disciples: “Ye are dead, and your life is hid with CHRIST in GOD.”

He that is thus dead so speaks and thinks, and sees what is without, as if it were not; because that which is seen is temporal and vain, that which is not seen eternal, and true. Thither then he looks; with it he burns; it is his joy; for this he labours, and all his desire is to attain to it.

He wishes, loves, seeks, tastes what is inner, and concealed: even that great good, that chief eternal good, of which thought never says It is enough, in that it is passing lovely and sweet, delightful and ineffable. Such

a one is far removed from the present, and yearns with all his affections after the eternal, keeping in subjection sensual appetites.

For sensuality seeks the outward, covets the delightful, looks to present things, neglects such as are to come. It shuns, whenever possible, the bitter and severe, albeit such are oftentimes salutary to the spirit.

Hence it allows not the soul to dwell in silence, and rest, but brings before it various vain imaginings, which can hardly be named, and yet should in truth be regarded as nothing. But whoso hath the grace of spiritual courage can at once subdue the immoderate desires of the flesh, singing in words of Divine efficacy: “O LORD, my stay, I will not fear what flesh can do unto me.”

2. Although, then, sensuality may war with the soul, and the voice of the flesh murmur, he doth not readily consent unto it, because, greater is the power of the love of GOD, which giveth him inner comfort.

He is sometimes so sweetly, powerfully, and glowingly drawn, forced away, and carried to GOD, that he sees not, or scarcely observes what is without, and makes so great a noise in the world; because he is not there, but elsewhere; not below, but above with GOD, and in GOD.

Who moveth him within, uplifts, and transports him as in a chariot of fire, that he may at length enjoy Him, in the long cherished holy longing of his heart. He is not found abroad, because his Lover hath taken him away.

There alone he hears His words, the words of the Beloved; and rejoices with joy because of the voice of the Bridegroom, in whom there is no alloy of doubt. Nor dose he forthwith pour out his vial to the sun, to drink in vanity; but hideth treasure he hath found, and closes it with a seal, that the foot of pride may not enter, and all its virtue be lost.

For so He says to him: “Set me as a seal upon thy heart, for love is strong as death.” Useful is it to seal, and keep the heart, lest haply the Beloved withdraw, and fly away—He who specially seeks and visits a pure and humble heart. These things the soul communes with itself, and marvels at so great good, which surpasses all understanding, and every good.

Again and again she marvels and anxiously asks what is this, and rejoices to learn that this is the manna that from Heaven comes down.

Now He Who giveth the true bread from Heaven, bestows also a good understanding, to know, that every good and every perfect gift is from

above, from the FATHER of Light. Of a truth, now, says the soul, this word is from GOD. Without Him I have nothing, but from Him all that I have.

3. Again she wonders, and complains that she cares so little for so great a good, with which she fares so well; that she doth not more frequently incline her heart to see, and hear that object than which nothing can be sweeter, or more blissful in the enjoyment.

Would, says she, that henceforth this may be so. For this is my chief delight, which evermore increaseth, if I labour to wait upon Him. "Let my Beloved come into His garden, and eat of the fruit of His apples." Let Him come unto me, and show Himself unto me, and I show myself to Him. He is my good, and my joy.

Then the soul begins to pant, and yearn for this good, in which is all good; this joy, in which is all joy; this one thing in which are all, small and great, the highest and the lowest: and this not anything created, but beyond the manner of human conceptions, the beginning and end of all good things by it created.

Hence sometimes it wishes to be wholly filled with all this good, and flooded with this most sweet of joys, and altogether absorbed and consumed by Him, so that nothing may of itself remain, but that she may be only His Whose are the fire and heat of love; by Whose wonderful work it is, that she is so wondrously borne to Him, and made one spirit with Him.

Yet does she not exalt herself, nor despise others, nor judge them as inferior, forasmuch as this is not her own, but the free gift of GOD; so that she has no reason to boast, when she feels herself thus comforted by Him. She seeks no praise, nor cares for external favours, but seeks the Beloved, for Whose praise and favour alone it thirsts; in Whom she findeth all things, and more than all. And this because she prefers His love, and sweetness, and the joyous fruition of Him to all things transitory, and longs for, and loves Him beyond all. Therefore she cannot pride herself, nor vainly boast of any good thing. For He is her true and sincere joy, her chief and only good, her whole desire and plenitude.

Much also does she wish that others may rejoice with her, and share such sovereign good without end, both here and in Heaven. For this is her desire and prayer, that He would make Himself known to all men, and convert and draw all unto Himself, so that He alone may be praised and glorified; for her Beloved is charity, and a well of love that cannot be exhausted.

He loveth all more than He can be loved by all. Well pleased is He, if any desire to love Him altogether, albeit he may not attain to the full depth of love, seeing that He swalloweth up, overcometh, and surpasseth all in love.

IX

ON SEPARATION FROM THE CREATURES

“LO, then would I get me away far off, and remain in the wilderness.” Oh, how salutary, pleasant, and sweet it is to be in solitude and silence, and to speak with GOD, and enjoy the only chief Good, in Which all good is contained. Would that I were so united to that most simple and only good, as to be moved by no affections and distraction from passing things; would that I did not through curiosity fix my eyes to see or drink in pleasure from any creatures or visible object.

O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? Alas! how oft doth my soul die because of the creatures it loves,—how oft, on account of them, doth it forget its Creator, and is led astray.

My fickle mind wishes now this, now that,—is now here, now there, seeking rest in the creatures, and finding none; for though every creature hath some delight in its use, yet its fruition satisfies not. Unsearchable is the heart of man, and who shall know it? GOD, Thou knowest that the thoughts of the heart are vain!

2. O GOD eternal, supreme and infinite Creator and Governor of all! I am Thy creature, whom Thou hast made in Thy might. I was made to love Thee, and now I would, but cannot as much as I desire.

I am bound down by vain love and sinful affections for transitory things, and when I attempt to shake them off, I can scarcely, or at all, tear myself from them without great pain. Oh, if Thou wouldst grant me a taste and relish for Thy sweetness, how quickly would they flee away and perish!

Sometimes, however, by my mind's eye, I see Thy invisible things by those that are visible, and Thee the Supreme Good, the true Eternal GOD. And I joy to linger in these thoughts. But somehow I am soon recalled from this pursuit, and miserably unstable, am caught anew by the love and bondage of the visible.

Lo, I make a fixed resolve in my heart, as a sign of a covenant between me and Thee, to see and love no creature, because of Thy great and precious love, but to despise all things, yea, and myself, and all that belongs to me.

3. But forthwith arise thoughts of this world, kinsfolk and familiars of the flesh so sweet to my heart as if there were indeed essential happiness in them, and I should lose some great good if I despised them. They assume a pleasant appearance, but conceal their end of sorrows, showing but the present on the plea that Thou must be sought everywhere and in all Thy creatures, and we are to reject or despise nothing, because evidently made by Thee, my GOD. And thus they often allure, and at length draw me altogether away from my resolve.

4. Oh, how vain, deceitful, yea, as nothing, do they prove even in their best and most flourishing state. How oft do they flee away after momentary delights, and leave me among the thorns and briars of an evil conscience! Alas me! O LORD, and again alas me! in that I have so easily given trust and assent to vanity, and so readily forsaken Thee, Who art everlasting Truth.

Oh, how I have gone astray, in that I have not despised all, and cleaved to Thee! For I was made to love and enjoy Thee, but by my inordinate love of creatures I have lost Thee, and found no rest of heart in them. Turn me, O LORD, unto Thee, and let me not follow after earthly things, as Thou hast promised the heavenly to them that follow Thee.

X

ON CONTEMPT OF EARTHLY CONSOLATION

“MY soul refuseth comfort.” Wander not, my soul, after vanity and false delights, but turn to the LORD thy GOD, for He is the fountain of all consolation. Whatever thou seekest in man or in the created, thou wilt lose, and mourn the loss, for though some semblance of good they may have, it cannot long remain.

Why art thou deceived in vain? It is folly to beg of poor mortals, when there is One with riches Who would give in abundance. Every creature is poor in comfort, but GOD is rich in grace, and giveth liberally to every man, and upbraideth none, provided thou seek diligently and wait with patience.

2. Return, my soul,—return, as the dove to Noah in the ark, to CHRIST, in the solitude of thy heart, for it is not safe to tarry long abroad. Seek not outward comfort, but inward refreshment. Remain not with the raven without the ark, but instantly shun the carcase. Return ahungred; CHRIST shall feed thee with the bread of heaven.

If necessity require, or infirmity now and then force thee abroad, tarry not; return speedily within, lest thou perish beneath a deluge of words, or be ensnared in the meshes of the enemy. Many are the snares that are spread for the soul that willingly wanders abroad,—many the means of security for the dove that quickly returns within. This, when it found no rest for its feet, quickly returned to Noah in the ark. Betake thyself, then, to thy closet, and dwell there, and count it grievous to be elsewhere.

3. Happy is the soul whose conscience is pure before GOD, which is not allured by any vain thing, which is neither polluted by love of any vain thing, nor wasted away by hatred.

Happy is the soul which seeketh no consolation from any creature, but places all its hope in GOD alone.

Happy is the soul which refuses all outward and temporal rest, and all that conduces to the joy of the flesh, but willingly embraces labour, and want for CHRIST'S sake.

Happy is the soul which entrusts itself to GOD, to do with her as seemeth good to Him.

Happy is the soul which never seeks its own glory, never desires her own will to be done, but whose design, and will, and love, are directed to the glory and will of GOD in all things.

Happy, in fine, is the soul which weans itself from all things temporal, and keeps itself pure in all its actions as in the sight of GOD.

4. Oh! soul that art such, rejoice and be exceeding glad, insomuch as thou art made capable of conversing with the inner and heavenly, and praising GOD night and day.

Happy and blessed of GOD is that soul whose longings are upward; whose hands and arms are stretched as the two wings of the cherubim; whose eyes are pure to contemplate GOD; whose every labour und struggle is from within, mounts up, and returns not until she hath found Him Whom she loves alone and beyond all.

And when she hath found Him, then, forgetting all, she follows Him whithersoever the Beloved wishes and leads. And when He has spoken, she will rejoice at His words, saying, "I am thy Beloved, thy only one, thy chosen one. I am thy exceeding great reward. Be thou humble in prosperity, and firm in adversity. See how they who love Me are comforted of Me. How sweetly, thinkest thou, shall they be treated when they have put off all the burdens of the flesh and of the spirit, and shall be received into eternal rest."

5. O that I might enjoy such sweetness, as a holy soul that is beloved of and devoted to GOD; when, the senses lulled, she is borne upwards in spirit, raised beyond herself to the embraces of the Beloved, and is united to GOD by the bond of closest love.

O! my GOD, true treasure of my heart, Thou knowest that this would be the only balm to cool the hidden sorrow of my heart. Thou alone art the bestower and infuser of this balm. Thou alone teachest, cherishest, comfortest, advancest, and sustainest. Thou alone canst lead me out and

bring me back, and doest as Thou wilt with the soul that thou hast chosen, for all that Thou doest and willest is good.

But I, who am as a sour vessel, and unworthy the infusion of Thy Spirit, yet implore that its sacred emanation may be increased unto me, that so my soul may taste the sweetness of Thy love, and experience those holy delights which willing souls given up to meditate on Thee, so oft acquire. Nay, I have scented at a distance the heavenly spices, when I have inwardly meditated what a holy soul doth enjoy in Thee.

6. But Thou, O LORD, knowest how seldom and slight is my meditation on things eternal! how oft my words are dry! how dark my understanding, my conscience how unappeased! how confused my inward thoughts! how unenlightened and undevout! not through another's fault, but all mine own.

And yet at times I seek the path that leads to inward things, taking as my guide deep inward thoughts. I dwelt with serious meditation on the goodly joys of a chosen soul; on what heavenly delights are hers, what peace, what tranquillity, what hope and rejoicing in GOD its SAVIOUR, whose speech is sweet, and appearance full of comeliness. And brief though be the time of the stay, yet full of rapture is it withal.

7. But even now when I think on this, and Thou enlightenest my darkness, I find increase of cause of Thy just complaint; still through the hidden chinks of grace I have glimpses that such and such is the soul closely united to Thee, and thus and thus Thou speakest unto it.

She is silent on all things sensible, and Thou speakest to it in the spirit of the invisible. She seems as if forsaken by all creatures, and Thou consolest her in an ineffable manner.

Then again I spake in my heart: Alas! for the sinful soul, the burthened conscience, the lukewarm spirit that lacks the light of grace, and knoweth not the sweets of spiritual joy, seeking tears and finding none.

But peace to the soul which loveth CHRIST in sincerity, and never turneth away her eyes from Him, but ever seeketh what is pleasing to Him, for she alone shall walk in peace and righteousness, and no stranger shall intermeddle with her joy.

Her eye shall see how good it is to wait on Him, and shall taste how sweet is the LORD her GOD, in Whom she puts her trust. She will remove herself far from external tumults, and shall wait for Him—with much longing, she shall wait His coming in her heart. Lo! thus doth God work in

His chosen vessels. If any go unto Him he shall not return empty, for He freely giveth water to him that thirsteth, and bread to him that is hungry.

8. My GOD, when Thou enterest into the soul that loves Thee, wilt Thou not feed her with Thy milk, and of Thy great sweetness lead her out of herself, to embrace Thee without any bodily image?

O Truth and Verity, how great the power, the might, and action of Thy love? When Thou speakest Thy word in the very secret of the heart, and showest it things both new and old in most blessed charity, and fruition whereat all human words are feeble. Henceforth Thou givest her to repose trustfully in Thee, as to eternal rest, in the fellowship of the saints; since by giving beforehand an earnest of spiritual grace, Thou makest it stronger in hoping for the unseen, and despising such things as are perceived by the senses.

Remember Thy poor suppliant, O gracious FATHER, by the bowels of Thy mercy, and send down the true bread from heaven, even Thy holy Word, full of consolation and grace.

XI

OF GREAT SWEETNESS AND CONSOLATION IN GOD

“ALL my bones shall say, LORD, who is like unto Thee?” He is One, and there is none like Him; He is my GOD, and there is none to be compared with Him. My best beloved and most faithful Friend, Who never leaves, but willingly hath fellowship with them that love Him; and if for a while He hides Himself, and afflicts, it is not for reproof, but for trial. He does not then altogether forsake, but more wisely teaches, so that we may advance in wisdom, and each one have a more perfect knowledge of himself, and to what he hath attained.

Behold Thou art fair, my Beloved, and very comely, not to the flesh, but to the mind,—not to the eye, nor any outward sense, but to the believing soul, that hath a pure heart, and that turneth herself to the invisible and spiritual.

Whoso would be united to Thee by devotion, must needs mortify every carnal affection, and above all preserve purity of heart. For Thou art displeased if any goeth to frail creatures in quest of consolation.

To this end Thou callest me within that I may love Thee, and orderest me to wait for Thee, seeing that I shall find Thee when I have laid aside myself; and as Thou willest, so will I. And this will be my whole good, to love and serve Thee freely, fearing no loss, making no terms with love, because Thou delightest in the soul that loveth Thee wholly and simply.

Oh, blessed soul that is thus one and united to Thee alone in life and death! But woe is me! who am cast out far from Thee; oft I go in other ways, lured by the love of passing things, and seek some other end than is becoming.

2. But that I may not perish with them, may I quickly return to the consideration of Thy praises, fixing my affections upon Thee. Grant me, O LORD my GOD, Who hast made all things out of nothing, out of all to praise Thy holy Name; for Thine is the power, Thine the wisdom, Thine the

goodness and mercy, Thine the Eternal Majesty and glory. “Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and Thy dominion from generation to generation.”

Thou disposest all things whether in Heaven or on earth; Thou knowest all things, and holdest them in Thy hand; nothing resisteth, nothing disturbeth Thee; but in tranquillity Thou judgest all, yea, and even the rebellious putteth under Thee and makest to serve Thee.

Thou knowest all things that are done in the world, and fixest their bounds before they take place. Thou art the GOD of Heaven and earth, the Creator and Governor of visible and invisible, and the Disposer of all times.

O preserve, I beseech Thee, Thy servants scattered far and wide throughout the world, and those that are specially dedicated to Thy service. Make them tell forth Thy praise, and with one voice everywhere declare Thy glory. Stir up their hearts mightily with love of Thee, and grant them grace to bring all their works to perfection and a holy end.

3. Oh, how good and sweet art Thou to them that love Thee! how pleasing to them that taste Thee! They who have experienced Thy sweetness know how from that time to think and speak of it, for Thy sweetness passes all sweetness, and sweetens every bitterness.

O LORD my GOD! holy men have spoken of Thee, and prophets have not kept silence. All the saints from the beginning of the world have believed in Thee, served Thee, worshipped Thee with sacrifices and oblations, praised and blessed Thy holy Name, for they acknowledged Thee as their Creator, and the Founder of all things, and in Thee above all have they placed their hope. They saw Thee in their visions, for Thou didst reveal Thy Name unto them, and they knew none beside Thee.

They preserved the law of Thy commands which Thou gavest unto them. They followed not most foolish images of false gods, but adored Thee, That livest for ever and ever, and hast created all things. They lifted their eyes up to Thee in confession of Thy praise, because from on high Thou hast poured into their ears a mighty voice, saying, “I am, that I am;” “Before Me there was no GOD formed, neither shall there be after Me.” I have made those things that shall be, and the past shall not perish from My remembrance.

Hearing and understanding these words, they lifted up the eyes of faith from afar, believing that the LORD He should save us, and He that was to come should come, and would not lie. Knowing these things beforehand,

they were comforted not a little, and mightily admiring the presence of His majesty to come, they fainted for very wonder. But coming to themselves in a little while, and looking with joy on the coming power of GOD, they exclaimed,

“It is Himself, it is He, the LORD our GOD, and there is none beside Him,” He has begun, and will save us. He cannot deny Himself, because He is true. As we have heard, so also have we seen; as we believe, so also we speak, and bear witness to the truth. Once GOD hath spoken. He spake, and it was done. He has said, “My counsel shall stand, but yours shall perish, O ye sons of men.”

4. Woe to you that think vain things, and scoff at the Word of GOD! Woe to you that devise wisdom from your heart, and exalt yourselves in your own power. Hear the Word of the LORD, ye that seek the LORD; know that He hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the earth. It is not well to be opposed to Him; stand ye and consider His ways. Return and come; He will freely receive you, for the LORD is merciful and gracious. He keepeth not His anger like man, but pardoneth all sins, yea, and will restore the former with the latter grace. Only turn unto Him with your whole heart, and give yourselves up to His service with a faithful mind. These are the words of the saints sounding in my ears.

As sweet music at a feast, or sweet incense from the censer, so is the Word of GOD in a pure heart. So have Thy saints, O LORD, filled with Thy Spirit, declared the greatness of Thy sweetness, and bequeathed to us their glowing words to be again poured out by us.

But my words, alas! are oft confined within narrow compass, and cannot spring up unto Thee. Yet if fire come down from above, then shall my words glow brightly. If they burn bright they will presently consume me. I cannot stand before Thy presence, for as chaff is swept away by the wind, so will sorrow be removed from my heart; and as rust in the fire, so will my sins be consumed. The Divine fire that consumeth all things will cleanse the floor of my heart.

Come down, O holy fire, and inflame my heart; touch me but a little, and I shall mount upwards.

The past shall no more be thought of, nor the future laid to my charge, for all will be forgotten. Old things shall pass away, new ones abundantly

come, and holy longings shall flow in apace, and rise on every side, wherever Thy cherishing Spirit shall list to breathe.

5. There shall be no fear, but love shall fill all, and trembling shall pass away; for this is the change of the right hand of GOD. What I speak then is not mine but His praises.

He is a comfort to him that mourns, He is bread to the hungry, and to the thirsty drink. His hand has been given, and there is a staff to the weak. The faint hath recovered strength, and the weary found rest. To him that sitteth in the shadow of despair new light is come, and an answer sent to him that cries.

A sweet light hath shone on the darkened, a way been made for the ignorant, and a door forthwith opened to him that knocked. His truth supporteth the doubtful, His authority succoureth the feeble, His charity maketh the call, as a mother her little one.

Now when I was longing to meet my Beloved, He most joyfully stood by, and thus spake.

“Behold, I am here, tell Me what new thing hath happened. Hast thou forgotten that thou must both do and suffer for Me?”

Then I was willing to go with Him, and He forbade me not: and forthwith I ascended, and forgot all my troubles. Then did I long to dwell with Him, and though unwilling to sadden, He taught with gentle words, that for the present it could not be.

“Thy longing,” He saith, “is good, and well pleasing is the prayer thou hast offered Me, but it must be deferred for a season.” Go and return home, and tell thy friends what great things the Lord hath done for thee. And say unto them: Prepare, each one, your hearts, and lay aside the heavy burthen of sin, and be watchful and strong against the snares of the devil. Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation. The time is at hand, see therefore that I find you ready. Lo! I have told you beforehand.

XII

OF SEEKING THE SUPREME AND ONLY GOOD

“SAY to my soul, I am thy salvation.” Oh! my soul, how noble art thou, how marvellous the power that lies hidden within thee, since thou canst not rest until thou reachest the highest good, and findest the final end. And when thou hast once known and found it, thy movement ceases.

O good beyond all good, O end without end, when shall I enjoy Thee without stint, and without end? Though here I find many good things, yet at best they refresh but satisfy not. One thing is needful: this one I seek and long for. All things for this one, and in this one are all things. Having this, I shall be content; and unless I win it, I shall be ever restless; for many things cannot satisfy me.

“What is this one? “I cannot tell; yet I feel I long for that, than which nothing is so good or so great, and to which no thought can rise. For it is not one among all, but one above all. Yea, it is my GOD to Whom it is good for me to cleave steadfastly and closely. To Him I say, and cry: “Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation.”

2. What more, my soul, full of longings, dost thou desire? Is it not better to cleave unto one, than unto many? For thou mayest have many things from one, not one out of many.

Cease then to seek after many things, unite thyself to the one, cleave to the one, for in the one all consists. Let others seek various and manifold things without, seek thou the one inward good, and it sufficeth.

Lo! one wants a country seat, another goes to his merchandise; one hoards up silver and much gold, another follows pleasures and honours; one seeks his highest pleasures in friends and relations, another in his familiars and kindred; one delights in visiting cities and grand houses, and, led by the

lusts of the eye, travels over various parts of the world; some aim at wisdom, some at power; some thirst after rule and dominion, and some after royal and princely favour. And thus one follows one thing, and another another, both in the secular and clerical life.

But few singly and simply seek after the One for the sake of the One, and hence they find not lasting peace, nor taste internal grace. For whoever are CHRIST'S seek not the temporal and earthly, nor look upon themselves as great and glorious, if in all these they should abound.

3. Hast thou then sought as these seek, O devout soul? "In no wise. I loathe them all; because one is my good, one thing I love, one I require, and that is better for me than all other goods below or above."

If thou hast found so great a good, I exhort, and beseech thee, guard and keep that for which thou hast despised all things. For having that it will not be grievous to be without the rest; nay, to gain it, thou wilt most rightly judge it worth while to forsake all and endure all.

4. Seek, then, my soul, so singular and supereminent a good. As long as thou art in the flesh, cease not to seek it, since that can never be sought enough which never can be grasped fully. There will be an end of seeking when the hour of fruition comes. Then He will be all in all, even He alone sufficing for each and all. Albeit if there He is still to be sought, where He is always found, yet not as here with much labour, but with greatest joy and love supreme.

But yet what He is to the godly in this life we are taught by His many titles and attributes, and the experience of His servants.

Attend then a little while with experience for our guide to the names of Divine goodness. I will mention a few, and may grace teach thee more and more hidden ones.

Behold, He is a Bridegroom to them that love Him, and a LORD to be feared by those who still serve Him in fear.

He is a FATHER to good children, a fearful Judge to the wicked.

To the weak He is a physician, and solid food to the strong; a Teacher to the ignorant, and Eternal Salvation to them that obey Him.

He is a Way to the beginners, Truth to the advanced, and Life to the perfect;

He is the Hope of the penitent, the best Comforter of the afflicted;

He is the Glory of the humble, but the confusion of the proud;

He is light in darkness, and a lamp in the night;

He gives balm to the wounded spirit, and much wine of gladness to the sorrowful.

He stands with him that fighteth, walketh with him that moveth on, runneth with the fervent, flieth with such as make not use of the wings of contemplation.

He is near to the prayerful, speaketh with those that read, and resteth with them that meditate.

5. Now in all these things it is one and the same GOD that worketh, appearing to every one as He pleaseth, and there is no censure of His words, nor searching into His great works. For His judgments are great, and passed finding out, and none can say, why doest Thou thus?—and why choosest Thou one rather than another? Foolish is the questioning of man against the Almighty, and every invention of the sons of Adam is vanity and nothingness.

6. “How do these things please thee, and of what kind now seemeth GOD unto Thee?” Sweet indeed is He to me, and none of His works can displease me. He is just, and who can accuse Him of unrighteousness? For whoso doeth this setteth himself up against GOD, and will be condemned by His irreprehensible light.

“But what are these things, which thou hast heard, in His sight? Scarcely a little spark in comparison with that which is concealed within.”

Thou askest what that is? I reply, I know not, but it is above me, and as it were an inaccessible darkness, the beginning and end of which are unknown. Be thy meditation rather, and thy affections, more frequently turned on the humble footsteps of JESUS, and seek not to climb to high things, lest thou be overpowered with the glory.

Moreover, because burning love sometimes forgetteth reverence and fear, we may pardon if the loving soul is sometimes intensely inflamed with its Beloved, so that it seeks Him, not only now, as a little child, He cries in the stable, or as crucified He hangs on the Cross, but also as He reigns in glory in Heaven, and wonderfully governs all things under Heaven.

7. Willingly do I follow Thee, Beloved JESUS, on earth, but oh! more gladly would I follow Thee into Heaven. That where my treasure is, there will my heart be also. Thou Who art at the right hand of the FATHER, art my treasure, dearer than every creature. For me Thou wast incarnate, for me

exalted. Thou hast left me an example on earth, Thou keepest Thyself as my reward in Heaven.

To Thee, then, my eyes are uplifted, after Thee all my footsteps shall go. My heart speaks to Thee, saying, Thy face, O LORD, will I seek. How long, O LORD, will the vision of Thy glory be delayed? Why hidest Thou Thy face, and regardest me as an enemy? Thou knowest that my mind is borne hither and thither, and my affections are drawn backwards and forwards, until it is united to Thee as its highest love in Heaven.

For the strength of love knows no rest, but unceasingly seeks for its Beloved, sends out messengers, redoubles prayers, and will not desist, for love must possess that for which it longeth for with such desire.

8. Draw me then, that I may begin to run fervently after Thee. I need drawing, yea, much drawing. For unless Thou attractest, no man can come, no man can follow, because each one turneth to himself. If Thou drawest, behold I come; Lo! I hasten, and run, yea, I am all on fire. But if not, I neither run, nor seek; scarce do I long to follow. But if Thou givest me Thy hand, then I run the more quickly, the more strongly Thou drawest.

Listen to the voice of my Beloved that draws me, "If I be lifted up, I will draw all men unto Me."

Oh! good Jesus, draw me after Thee, and then not I only, but we all shall run in the odour of Thy ointments. First then draw me after Thee, and then shall others follow when they see the example of my good life. But lest pride assail us, it is good for us to remember and feel that we begin to run not in our own strength but in the odour of Thy ointments.

9. This is the Divine drawing, without which none advances, nay, none even can begin to come, as Thou hast said, "No man cometh unto Me, except it be given him by My FATHER."

Whomsoever, therefore, the FATHER draws, he verily follows Thee, and relinquishes self. Well drawn was He that said, "Master, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest." But it is not the lot of all so to be affected towards Thee, nor of a little soul so readily to follow Thee in all things.

10. And now what hinders thee, my soul, from leaving all for JESUS? Why art thou so reluctantly separated from the vain and perishing? What can visible things advantage thee? Behold, as thou goest after mortal and visible things, seeking to find contentment in them, thou lovest what is far better.

When this thou doest, thou turnest thyself away from the chief good, and castest behind thee the true, blessed, and eternal life. Wherefore thou wilt continue wretched and unhappy, full of sorrow and anxiety. For wheresoever thou turnest thyself, thou wilt always find pain and much disquietude, unless thou again turnest to thy Creator, Who is thy peace and rest assured.

But, if thou tarriest not too long in earthly things, nor fixest thy feet in the mire, but rather considerest and veneratest Him in the glass of His creatures, not the image that passest away, but Him, Whose image and superscription they bear, happy shalt thou be, and thou shalt not die.

For when thou seekest not visible things to enjoy them, but lookest upon them to bless the name of Thy Creator, by making from the greatest and least of His works as it were a ladder on which thou mayest ascend upwards, thou shalt be freed from baneful snares of this world, and shalt be most closely united to thy wished for end, Which is GOD above all, blessed for evermore. Amen.

XIII

OF THE UNION OF THE SOUL WITH GOD, AND THE WITHDRAWAL OF GRACE

“MY soul hangeth upon Thee.”

My GOD, True Comforter, Thou knowest that I am not wearied of Thee; but would willingly speak with Thee daily in secret.

But where shall I find Thee, if perchance I lose Thee for an hour? Who will lead me unto Thee? For Thou art above all, and I man, the poorest and most sorry of these Thy lower works. Thou art in Heaven, and I on earth. Thou alone art most High, and I am poor and needy. Who hath measured the distance between Heaven and earth? They are far apart, but Thou art further from me. Who will then unite me to Thee? Either Thou wilt do it, or none can. But yet if Thou wilt, it shall be, and that done right early.

And Thou knowest that of myself I am too prone to fall, but by Thee I can stand, and by Thee also advance. Therefore doth my soul hang on the condescension of Thy SPIRIT, and the infusion of Thy saving grace. When Thou commandest, it shall be lifted up; but when Thou turnest away Thy face, it shall be disquieted within. Yet in Thy charity and loving-kindness, Thou shalt take hold of me, and Thy right hand shall lead me wonderfully unto Thee.

2. Children of the earth, and sons of men, hear that it is possible, yea, most easy with GOD, for that to be fulfilled which is written—“The rich and poor meet together.” I am poor, and in need of all things. He is rich and wanting nothing, and He is my GOD. Though I have but little experience in

this matter, I have yet a faithful witness to prove that the soul may, by grace, be united to God.

“My Beloved is mine, and I am His. He feedeth among the lilies.” This is the testimony of the two friends, of the Bridegroom and Bride, a suitable and valid testimony of the sacred law. And the second is, “I pray, FATHER that they may be one, as We also are one.”

Mark the clear testimonies of the two books; by which it is clear that the soul may be closely united to GOD, in proportion to the grace imparted unto it from Heaven.

Now albeit this union is rare, yet it is very dear, and not unknown to the loving soul. Difficult though it be, it is not altogether impossible. The soul that GOD shall so join to Himself let none dare to separate or disturb. If thou art astonished at the greatness of this union, rather wonder and admire the excellence of His goodness, and the marvellous union in the assumption of humanity. He, Who alone doeth wonderful things, can do what He wills. If thou seekest for merit in this, thou wilt only find the good pleasure of His holy will.

3. Oh! sweet union with CHRIST, and under the wings of CHRIST. Oh! gracious intimacy, full of the love and sweetness of the HOLY SPIRIT, which is better felt than described. This is the lot of the soul which has weaned itself from all earthly things, which no love of the present life keeps back, but which the secret of her mind hath carried upwards.

But ah! the clearer this is known to the loving soul, the more it is hidden from me. Joyfully would I be present when it is well with the devout soul, and that is when it is with JESUS at noon day. It fares ill, yea, very ill, when Jesus is absent, and the sweets of His grace cease to flow; when Holy Scripture delights not; when it is wearisome to be instant in prayer and meditation; when the clouds of the heart thicken, and evil thoughts so prevail that they can scarce be checked, but seem to strive to overthrow all former good.

4. O LORD GOD, why doest Thou thus? What meanest Thou by this? Oh! Good JESUS, what purposest Thou by this? Were it not displeasing to Thee, I would entreat Thee to grant a further colloquy between Thee and Thy beloved. Since in all her wishes she seeks Thy gracious presence with which to be caressed with chaste delights, I wonder why Thou allowest her

sometimes to remain so desolate. Thou passest by, and leavest her, as if she had not sought Thee.

Then she mourneth, and is alone. It sounds as if it were her voice that cries out, "I have longed for Thee in the night season!" It is night to her, when Thou, her True Light, art not present. She prayeth then for Thy presence, that the darkness of sin may not lay hold of her. Many a trouble doth she feel when the grace of Thy visitation is withdrawn. For had she not felt so, she would not so unceasingly have cried after Thee. Another hath cried out also, as I before said, "My soul hangeth upon Thee." But I believe that no trouble can be or seem so grievous, as for Thy presence to be denied.

5. And it is no wonder that from so great want the loving soul falls into a certain faintness of heart. For sometimes it is hard to find Thee, and when Thou hast at length been found, she joys at Thy return, and hopes to lead a joyful time with Thee. Not fearing Thy withdrawal, she dreads no sorrow. But Thou, as if minding something else, oftentimes fliest away. Thou suddenly withdrawest from her hands when she thinketh not of such a leave taking. I praise Thee, yet how shall I praise Thee in this matter? If Thou hast any praise or sweetness, why dost Thou seem to lose it thus? If it were any but Thou, haply it might be a stumbling-block to her. But she cannot be offended in Thee, in that she knows herself to be so dearly loved by Thee. If then Thou dost in this figure forth Thy justice and reason, unfold it to me, I pray Thee, O GOD! I would fain understand it; and I deem it not profitless to know even a little thereof. No one of himself comprehendeth Thy judgments; but Thy light only illumines the obscure, and dispels the evil.

6. Why then dost Thou sometimes so secretly withdraw from the soul, when it knows it not? Lovest Thou it, or not? If Thou lovest, why, my Beloved, dost Thou depart? If Thou lovest not, why didst Thou formerly visit it? If thou lovest it no longer, why dost Thou return again, and knock at the door, and enter? Art Thou trifling in thus coming and going away? Far be the thought from me. But such constant changes are no light matter to the soul; nay, no small disturbance springs therefrom. Less, perchance, would be her complaint, wert Thou to say plainly, "I go away, and, behold, I come again, and thy heart shall rejoice, and thy joy no man shall take from thee." But now Thou sayest nothing to her, only she calleth to mind that word of which she experiences the truth, that JESUS hid Himself, and went

away from the temple. I have, therefore, somewhat against Thee; but my complaint springs from a good root. I would humbly be instructed, not fretfully contend. Thou wilt haply, in good time, answer my request.

7. Let the devout soul, then, for greater clearness, speak somewhat for herself. And do thou on thy part, freely answer. For thy Beloved will patiently hear thee, and meet thee with words of peace, that thou suffer no loss therefrom. For who will comfort thee if He be not thy Comforter? And who will bear thy infirmity so mildly as He Who carrieth all things without weariness? To whom canst thou more safely unburden thy sorrows, than to Him Who fully knoweth all things? In whom wilt thou put more trust than in Him Who is Infallible Truth?

Now if any stranger, or one who is not a friend of the Bridegroom, be now listening to these things, let him be put out.

But if there be one who loveth the Bridegroom, is faithful, devout, and disciplined inwardly, let free entrance be given. Welcome him who guards his conscience; that loveth virtue and discipline; that is pure in affection, and clear in understanding; is humble in himself and kind to others; who wrests not the meaning of what he hears, nor speaks vainly, nor disputes rashly, nor defends his opinions too warmly, nor speaks proudly.

But, on the other hand, hath learnt to reverence what he understands, and interpret soundly the hidden and mystical; let such come in, and be freely welcome at this conference. For it is the affections of the heart rather than the words themselves—not the echo, but the sense—that should be weighed. Tell me, then, O soul, how thou bearest thyself up when the grace of thy Beloved is absent?

I know that I could but hardly endure it, if He were long absent, and cannot but think the like of Thee. If thou pleasest, let us here sit down, and discourse together of this matter for our mutual consolation.

XIV

OF THE SOUL'S SORROW WHEN GRACE IS ABSENT

“MY soul slumbereth for very heaviness.”

What mean thy words? Why sayest thou, O Sion, the LORD hath forsaken me? Fear not, daughter of Sion, thou loving, and watchful soul. Behold thy King, thy best Beloved, will come unto thee. Arise, stand up on high, and joy shall come to thee from the Holy One.

“I sought Him, said the soul, but I could not find Him; I called Him, but He gave me no answer.” Therefore my soul slumbered for heaviness.

And I answered, it is the voice of the turtle-dove when she has lost her mate. It is not with thee to-day as yesterday, and in days gone by, when thou sangest songs of joy. The morning hath passed away, and the evening has come; but the Bridegroom slept at noon-day, and thou couldst not approach him.

Thy words give out notes of sadness, and thine eyes are wet with tears. Thou art in grief, my soul, and needest comfort. But tell me, I entreat, whence is this?

“I seek not gold, nor silver, nor aught of this world. Loss or gain affect me not, injury and poverty disturb me not, for I am now dead to the world, and the world is crucified to me, and I to the world.”

If I know thee well, thou hast long ago renounced all worldly things. But hast thou perfectly learnt self-abnegation in all things, and attained to contempt of thine ownself? This is the lot of very few, and yet is specially required of thee.

Whence, then, springs thy grief? What hast thou lost? If it is touching thy Beloved, well mayst thou show grief of heart; nor can any joy be thine till

He return, and restore His countenance unto thee. But how, meanwhile, dost thou keep up, O delicate soul, that leanest upon Him? For I know that He is not with thee always as thou desirest. What consolation, then, in His absence hast thou, and where dost thou find rest? Tell me thy secrets even though they be full of grief.

None but He who loveth not, can doubt thy grieving for CHRIST when absent. Now thou art sorrowful, but it is for CHRIST the Bridegroom, and not for this world. And I know that when He returns, thou wilt be comforted once more, for He will not forget thee for ever. For He has said: "I will not leave you comfortless; I will go, and return to you again."

Thy words then are not an idle breath, though full of grief; they show a loving heart, and strike the cold breast, which burns not with the love of CHRIST. For thy voice is sweet; it is the voice of the turtle-dove, not the clamour of discontent. Therefore I trust that thou wilt find Him, for Whom thou mournest as lost.

2. Yet again I ask thee, what sayest thou of Him, Whom when absent thou so bitterly bewailest? Is He good, or thinkest thou otherwise?

"Yea, good is He, and very good; just and faithful, in Whom there is not, and cannot be, any iniquity."

Why then dost thou so grieve for one so good in whom is no guile?—"I grieve not for Him that is good, but I bewail myself unhappy one, in that I have lost a faithful and true friend. I, I have deserved it: but woe! woe! that I was not more careful to keep His holy grace. Having lost, I now realise what I had possessed. The absence of the Beloved tells how much His Presence profited me. I was glad and rejoiced in Him, but was too little careful to prevent His sudden departure.

He came skipping on the mountains, cheerful and joyous stood He in the gates of my house. And forthwith I shut the doors of the flesh, and I brought my Beloved in unto me, and sat with Him, and rested under His shadow from storm and rain. And I joyed, when I beheld my Beloved. Why should I not be glad? For He is the joy, and exultation of my heart. Oh! what had I, and what did I possess in that hour? I cannot tell thee, how well it was with me: nor indeed is it fitting how to tell. It is enough that He I love alone was present, and I could desire no more.

3. "Oh! how I loved Him, when I neglected myself, and all things else. I cared little or nothing for all that could charm me, for I was rapt away in

His love, and whatever was not of Him, was distasteful and insipid. When He was taken away, my heart was well-nigh cast out of me. For my soul hung upon His grace, and I had no other comfort save in Him, Whom I now lament.

He sufficed me, and was enough for every kind of joy. As I wished, so wished He; and whatever He enjoined me, that I willingly accepted, and wholly and readily gave myself to Him. And there was between us but one mind, and great tranquillity. And none dared break in upon our silence, as He commanded—‘I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awaken my Beloved, till he pleases.

Now weigh well, if thou canst understand my words, how I must needs mourn the absence of my Beloved, seeing that through His presence I abounded in all good things.”

And I answered; I know what thou meanest: often have I proved thy words by experience. But in this let us take comfort, that the dispensation of His will is the advancement of our devotion.

And now thankfully do I receive all that thou hast hitherto spoken; but yet I would hear still further. For a fuller explanation is needful to the dull of understanding.

XV

OF THE SEARCH FOR THE BELOVED

“BLESSED be GOD, Who hath not turned His mercy from me.”

Behold, I am here again, then, asking with earnest inquiry, how thou wouldst act if at any time thy Beloved leave thee without His inward consolation? What wouldst thou advise to be done? And by what means can He be reconciled and called back again!

I entreat thee, O most beloved and devout spouse of CHRIST, hide not from me any of those things which I have come to ask. Thou canst profit me much by now laying open to me thy holy thoughts. By thy words too I can measure the weight of my own grief and sorrow, and learn whether it be just or unjust.

For I have seen thee at times all joyful, and presently sorrowful, and then again rejoicing; and from thee I have learnt somewhat to consider my own case. For I judge that this change most chiefly springs from the withdrawal and coming again of thy only Beloved, and, knowing thou hast suffered many changes, I have come to question thee.

2. And she said—“Yielding to thy wishes, I will at least endeavour to unfold a little what passed within me, whether it be when I am with the Beloved, or when as one weaned from Him I sit alone, expecting Him, Whom my soul loveth.

“Know this then first, that His absence causes much grief and sorrow, in proportion as His grace confers joy and sweetness. But why He thus changes, it were more fitting for Him than me to tell. Him thou shalt hear, when I have finished the words of my song; because at last we will bring Him in, and sitting in the midst of us, He shall teach us His plan, which He is wont to adopt with those that love Him.

“But now hear me patiently, and be not wearied with my imperfect words. For we are come together to pitch our hearts in unison, so that we may either mourn together, or joy one with another in love. ‘For woe to him that is alone, for when he falleth he hath none to lift him up, and if two lie together, they shall warm one another;’ in that, when one is sad, the other suggesteth consolation, or if he refuse to be comforted, sheweth compassion, and begins to mourn deeply with his friend; and thus they either rejoice together, or, if joy be taken away, comfort each other with mutual tears. And if from adversity or other tearful cause, sorrow still remains, yet their souls become more composed; because they find they are in harmony, and that, though all else change, their hearts cannot be changed or corrupted. Who would not exclaim, at the sight of so sweet a concord of minds—‘Behold how good and pleasant a thing it is, brethren, to dwell together in unity?’

3. “I can therefore discourse more freely with thee, because I fear no craft nor guile in thee.

“Behold that most sweet Bridegroom, and my most beloved Friend, the LORD JESUS CHRIST, the Lover of holy souls, Who cannot cease from love, hath drawn a poor wretched creature to Himself: and even when I was not, He granted me the gift of being, of life, of understanding, and the enjoyment of this common light. From Him comes the gift of being born again by the grace of Baptism, and clothed with the glory of His own merits.

“After this when I had defiled myself with many sins, and was unfit to render love for love, He looked not to my filthiness, but into the bosom of His own mercies. For when I still wandered further, He called me by His grace, and would not suffer me to perish in this world. Then He provided me a place to rest in whilst I am in this life, even so long as I shall be in this frail body.

“Yet it is not true or lasting rest, whatever be the habitation, neither is this dwelling under the shadow of the Beloved. That only is true rest, which after the labours of this passing life is enjoyed in one’s native home. Yet is it in a measure a sweet recreation for the soul that sighs after GOD, to see herself freed from the cumbrous wishes of the world, and already to be, where she can more fully serve the Beloved, and in secret silence be given up to herself and Him.

4. “Yet was He not wanting to me in divers necessities, aiding me especially on the first essays of temptation. Often too He hath instructed me by useful discourse, confirming me by His words. And as new plants are watered with rain, so has He watered me with internal comfort, that the virtue begun in me might not dry up, as a potsherd.

“And He said to me: if thou art willing, and wilt listen unto Me, then thou shalt see every good thing. If thou doest what I command, thou shalt be My friend. If thou choosest Me, and lovest Me above all, whatsoever thou askest of the FATHER shall be done unto thee. But if thou leavest Me, this shall be to thee as a stumbling-block, and I will awaken Mine anger against thee. And when thou seekest another, he shall not long please thee; but shall be turned unto weariness and bitterness, because I only am the salvation and life of the soul.

“And I turned me unto Him, Who had done so much good unto me; and shaking off the dust of earthly affection, resolved to live henceforth to Him alone; since nothing is better than He; no method more sure than His.

5. “Let whosoever will, go and seek whom to love and serve: I have found the true Husband of the soul, for Whom it would not be hard for me to die, that so I may ever cleave to His love. Therefore I cleaved unto Him, for He pleased me; and none better. For such a One my soul most ardently longed: than Whom none could be greater, or better, or more worthy, and Who would abound in all good things.

“And because He was passing kind, He further gave me words of comfort: watchfully providing that none of them should affright, or overwhelm me by too great harshness and asperity: but that they should lay upon me, and teach me ‘that His yoke is sweet and His burthen light,’ that so my young affections might be the better drawn on at first, and bent the more strongly on the Beloved, never to recoil again.

“Better will she be taught and greater progress make, saith He, if she be stirred up not by force, but by her own accord. More easily will she endure My yoke upon her, if love invite her by rewards, rather than fear affright by punishment. But yet if she should need an impulse, that it should be so done with moderation, as not to overpower her by violence.

“For He Himself knew what was fit for a young plant; and how good this tenderness should be to me hereafter, especially in the day of trial, when I could readily call to mind what He had done in the beginning for my soul,

and so I might not fail in any after contest. Nor did He unfold to me at once what and how much I should suffer in His service; but considering the weakness and frailty of the new rising plant, He sometimes mingled sad things with my joy, so that I might become hardy and strong.

6. “Afterwards He led me about, and taught me, and carried me on His shoulders. He led me through the pastures of His holy writings, and armed me with a holy strength against the wickedness of the devil.

“He shewed me, as in a glass, the examples of all virtues,—The Holy Patriarchs, and Prophets, and the glorious luminaries of the New Testament.

“He led me about among the desert places, and the tabernacles of Egypt, where the great name of monks and cœnobites first flourished, who declared and made it credible by their examples, that the yoke of CHRIST is sweet, and the broad way of the world bitter and deceitful. He taught me as a mother her little one, breaking spiritual nuts for me, and placing the kernels in my mouth, because they were a pleasant food.

“Trace out, if thou canst, what these things signify, and where such may be found. Open the apostolic writings, and cast thine eyes thereon and read, that thou mayest, if thou canst, grasp so great mysteries. Meditate on Isaiah, study the Gospel, that light of all lights, and see whether they do not produce most delicious kernels. Whatever thou findest obscure and hard to be understood is a kernel in a shell. But if thou hearest it explained, and understandest what before thou couldst not, the shell is broken, and the sweetness of the kernel relished in the heart. So thus must thou think with other mysterious and hidden sayings. Hence thou canst find as many nuts as there are hidden and mystical sentences.

7. “And how thinkest thou He carried me on His shoulders? This He did as often as He beheld my weakness, and yet cast not away nor despised me, but bore with me with patience and long-suffering.

“He carried me also on His shoulders when He inspired others, and enabled them to bear with patience with my infirmities, and whatever was blameworthy in me.

“He carried me yet more tenderly on His shoulders when bearing His cross He went forth to a place called Calvary, where also He was crucified. For it was I rather than His Cross, there carried by Him. And my sins were a heavier burthen to His shoulders than the wood of the Cross. For that

Cross was borne for me, not for Himself. And yet it deserved to be held sacred and in honour, for His sake Who carried it, and died upon it.

8. “Oh! how far above all must I love and reverence Him, by Whose merits and grace I am thus sought out and redeemed. Therefore shall the Beloved be to me as an only son to his mother, yea though I know full truly that I am not worthy of His love. Whatever I have heretofore presumed has sprung from His condescension. What care I else but follow where He calls, and run to His most sweet embraces. I call to mind what David said, ‘Who am I, to become the son-in-law of a king?’

“And yet far greater than that is this kinship, in that it is a chaste and pure connection, where flesh and blood have no part, but perfect fidelity, and the answer of a good conscience before GOD. Of which also that disciple whom JESUS most loved, said, ‘Greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world.’ For GOD is love, and love begetteth this kinship. Since then David thought himself too mean to become the son-in-law of an earthly king, how humbly ought I to think of myself when the LORD, the King of kings, deigns to notice me, needy as I am, and draw me to His love.

9. “Thus, then, hath He dealt with me, not as I have deserved, but as His most exceeding mercy hath vouchsafed, and as in all things it seemed fit to His love and infinite goodness. Happy and blessed the soul that is thus bound with the cords of Divine love. How noble and free is he who hath experienced the vows of this holy life.

“And seeing that our discourse concerning the Beloved is already long extended, and yet that thy question is not fully answered, let another follow, which may He deign to render pleasant and fruitful unto us both.”

XVI

OF THE PROTECTION AND LONG-SUFFERING OF THE BELOVED

“BEHOLD, as the eyes of a maiden are on the hands of the mistress, so also my eyes wait always on my Beloved.”

Since first I began to love Him, I have also wished to continue with Him. And when I had so resolved, it pleased Him; and He confirmed my purpose, saying, “He that remaineth in Me, and I in him, bringeth forth much fruit.” But to prove whether this love were true, and strong, and chaste, it was needful for temptation to unfold this. But I could not be tempted, without His permission; and unless He withdrew Himself for a season.

And because temptation tends to the cleansing of the inner man, and to greater increase of virtues, and the clearer perception of spiritual gifts, it took hold upon and began to exercise me.

How strongly and how often temptation tossed me hither and thither, Thou, O LORD my GOD, Whom nothing secret escapes, most fully knows. Even He is the Witness of all that passes within my heart; and even now He looketh upon me, and knoweth that I am but a frail and earthly vessel.

2. Unless then He had helped me when I was so heavily oppressed, so that I thought I could scarcely live, my soul would have dwelt in hell, as if already cast into the pit of despair. But He Who is wont to be with the troubled in heart, took pity on me. For who could have endured so many temptations, had not GOD been his helper and protector? Of His mercy was it that I could stand then before the face of the storm. It is of the gift of His goodness that I now stand. Wherefore should I put no trust in myself as long as I am in the flesh.

Even if the sky be ever so serene, I may not count on fair weather long. For the air may suddenly be stirred up, and, perhaps, when least expected. Therefore the more needful are the grace and protection of the Beloved; the more truly I learn from experience that everything is pregnant with danger. No place is safe but heaven, where my Beloved feedeth His elect in joy and exultation.

3. But ah! when shall I be there? What can I say of it? I may think of it a little but yet not clearly. To enter there I know I cannot.

Would that He would come and place me in that bright, safe, and pleasant pasture of His saints, where Satan is not, and where evil never comes.

I am still tossed about in the sea, and whether I shall reach the haven of salvation, through the mighty swelling waves of temptations, alas! I know not.

Nothing therefore is safe with me; but this remaineth as my shield and defence, for me ever to look at the light of faith, and humbly implore the grace of my Beloved; to place full confidence unweariedly in Him; to consent in no way to be separated from His love; in a word, to trust more to His providence and boundless mercy than in my own industry.

Wherefore, though I very often stumble and fall into sin, yet I should in no wise despair, but will instantly cry aloud unto Him,

O LORD my GOD, have mercy upon my soul, and suffer me not to be overwhelmed in my temptations, but faithfully aid me that I may boldly resist and overcome. Thou that triest me by Satan, and placest me often on Thy left hand, stretch out Thy right hand to do the work of Thy hands.

But if so grievous a temptation come upon me that I cannot even cry aloud to the LORD, I will sigh unto Him from my inmost heart. For He knoweth the secrets of the heart, and the longings of the spirit. And it is His will that none of the little ones who believe on Him should perish.

4. O! how great hath His mercy been towards me, that even when I knew and perceived it not, He was with me in my tribulation! For many a time hath He preserved me from being given over to my passions. But sometimes out of His hidden judgment it came to pass, that I fell and was overcome in little things, lest haply I should grow proud, and presume in great things: and that being humbled and abashed I might learn that I was nothing when I seemed to stand firm, and flourished most. I would advise thee then not rashly or too soon to praise me, even though I may make some

advance; but reserve thy praise for a happy end; nay, even let thy praise be given not unto me but unto the LORD. Let the glorious GOD alone be praised, Who hath so oft stood by me in my temptations.

5. For oft when I was led captive by them, He mercifully set me free. At times when they rushed on like a whirlwind to destroy me, He sent forth His arrows and scattered them, He multiplied His lightnings and confounded them, and they departed from me for awhile. For He would not that I should be altogether without them, as He hath seldom granted this to any of His saints in this life.

And after this I enjoyed a little rest; “for so he giveth His beloved sleep.” And when I had gained it, I did not betake to bodily or worldly ease, but to repose of mind, that so I might behold the world afar off, and in a small degree the very sanctuary of Heaven. Therefore I looked well into myself to see what manner of person I was, and how I might better please Him Who had vouchsafed me marks of love, far exceeding my deserts.

For in the whirlwind of temptation I could not see how sweet my Beloved was, but only in serenity of mind, and the quiet of solitude. And as far as in me lay, I wished for this peaceful serenity, free of interruption, that I might the more perfectly cleave to Him, and wait upon Him without anything to abstract my thoughts, or involve me in trouble.

6. But not always according to the longing of my soul does the effect of His grace follow. Sometimes the coveted sweetness is granted; yet sometimes it is justly delayed. For who would not desire to rest under the shadow of the Beloved whilst it was allowed, and time and opportunity admit? But now my Beloved acteth interchangeably with me.

So I do not feel always what disturbs me, nor continually enjoy what delights me, but the evening and the morning are one day, in that the whole of this mortal life is spent in the rising and the setting of joy and sorrow. Well was that Saint conscious of this who said, “Thou visitest him in the morning, and suddenly triest him.”

Nevertheless it seemeth some little rest when temptation is not too constant and importunate. And therefore when it is given me to rest sweetly even for a little while in my Beloved, I am forthwith full of gratitude and love. I rejoice, and ever will rejoice in Him for so divinely great a gift.

7. I am moreover emboldened to address Him on any occasion that presents itself, because He has so often freely anticipated my desires by His

kind visitation. For, when He draweth nigh and would spend holy day with me, light forthwith shines into my heart, before whose presence the darkness of all vain thoughts is banished, and the long coveted serenity possessed. For at His entrance nothing disgraceful or impure can remain, in that He is the lover and implanter of purity; and it must needs be that all the illusions of the Devil, and the pomp of the world depart.

When therefore my passions, and the temptations which I had borne, were subdued, I began to see Him more clearly, and love Him more fervently. I strove also to return Him thanks, for that He had at length deigned to restrain the tumult of my sins within me. For they oft break my peace, and close my mouth, so that I cannot speak to my Beloved. But vain is their strife against His power and wisdom, Who in every tumult can glide into the heart, and silently pour out His secrets to me, so that all their whisperings I can count as naught, yea, as scarcely worthy of notice.

8. O my Beloved, dearest and most fair, take me, I pray Thee, so to Thyself, when Thou seest my affections pressed down by a weight of sins, or lured away by any vain occupation, that I may not wander farther after evil thoughts, and end in the loss of Thy grace, without which I cannot dwell in Thy surpassing friendship.

For Thou art my LORD and my GOD, Who healest and sanctifiest all things by Thy word, Who hast appointed my soul for life, and hast not suffered my feet to be moved, but hast delivered me from the evil hour, and the snares of death.

O! how many have been forsaken and have perished who were less guilty than I am. Bless thou then the LORD, O my soul, and let all that is within me praise His Holy Name. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits. Whatsoever thou sayest, or thinkest, or purposest in His praise is little and worthless. For He is beyond all praise, and sweeter than all melody. Therefore my soul cleaveth unto Thee, O GOD, and loveth Thee beyond all Thy gifts, though beautiful and sweet is all that Thou hast of Thy charity bestowed.

For Thou alone art the Bridegroom, all else but gifts and tokens of Thy love. I will not give my love to them instead of Thee, nor will I believe that all these together can without Thee suffice me, lest I lose at once both them and Thee. Thou permittest me to use many things for Thy sake, but Thou allowest me not to enjoy any in place of Thee; therefore, my beloved

Bridegroom, JESUS CHRIST, have I preferred Thee above all, and striven to love Thee beyond all. Grant me then happily to enjoy Thee, and in blissful union to be made happy with Thee for ever.

9. But whither have I wandered? I have, perchance, drawn thee on further than thou didst wish? But bear with me, my friend. For it is the love of my chief and only Friend that has somewhat carried me away; and Oh! that He may yet bear me along more and more, and lift thee up on high also. Let Him prepare us for a heavenly ascent; but let us keep to the humble descent.

Thou askest if I am not sometimes left by the Beloved? I answer, yes!

“What doest thou meanwhile?”

I bear up with what calmness I can, and wait for His coming. I am weighed down in nature, but bear up inwardly in my spirit, lest my grief be inconsolable. I remember that we live not in love without sorrow. I live by faith, believe in the Holy Scriptures, and assent to their words of comfort. And although it still may not be well with me, yet I distrust not, nor ought I to doubt that it will be better with me. True and faithful are those things which are told in the sayings of Thy Saints. For they were exercised, and tried in many like things. Nature longs after ease, and seeks to be comforted; but the spirit is ready to endure all things, which GOD would have me suffer. If then I am somewhat cold in devotion, and slow in the performance of good works, yet is my wound not without a remedy.

“Though He slay me,” saith the righteous, “yet will I trust in Him.” If thou lovest virtue, patience is a great virtue. Let it now, therefore, keep thee. For the very difficulty of work frequently increases the lustre of the virtue. And that virtue may be proved, and made to shine more brightly, it is generally tried by obstacles. When then such a trial comes upon thee, be not distrustful, neither be dismayed; but preserve patience, and commend the justice of GOD.

10. GOD is not so severe and unmerciful as to leave thee long un comforted. Only beware of immoderate grief, and murmur not against the righteous and holy One because thou art left by Him; lest the evil spirit assail thee with temptations yet more bitter, even to unbelief and blasphemy, and thou, through over fear, be more tormented than is fitting.

Bear up then a little while, and repress thy sorrow, whatever heaviness of heart or of body assail thee. Continue firm in the good resolve which thou madest at first; for in such a critical hour it will be thy only joy to place all

hope on the Beloved. Patiently wait for heavenly consolation; and thou shalt soon feel the richness of His grace, and the loving countenance of GOD. Behold, thou hast a faithful witness saying: "I waited patiently for the LORD, and He inclined unto me."

11. But that thou mayest deserve to win thy desire, pray more constantly, and ask others' prayers for thee; and thus surrender thyself wholly to His will and ordinance, to deal with thee, as seemeth best to Him. And say to Him with holy confidence, my lots are in Thy hands, Thou knowest how it is with me; Thou seest what I suffer; and if now Thou willest, I shall be comforted right early. Be it always done unto me, as seemeth good and right to Thee; but have mercy upon me, who am poor and needy and desolate, crying humbly unto Thee.

If then thou perseverest in patience and endurance, and swervest not, because of a little affliction, from the faith and love which are in CHRIST JESUS, the splendour of His grace shall assuredly return unto thee, and enlighten thee more fully than before. And thy Beloved on His return shall be far dearer to thee than if He had never been absent. For His sentence is not irrevocable; nor is He so angry, that He may not be reconciled again. He will be quickly and most easily appeased, if only thou givest thy hand to the work, and promise to be more watchful, and sooner make amends.

If only thou followest this salutary advice, thy Beloved will be with thee as before, and in His presence thou shalt rejoice, and say: "Oh! how great is Thy goodness, which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee; which Thou hast wrought for them that trust in Thee; Thou shalt hide them under the shadow of Thy wings." O Sion, thou shalt be renewed, and see the renowned One, Who is to reign in thee. He is the King of virtues, thy Beloved, Whose back is covered with pale gold; and Whose head is of fine gold.

These few words spoken for thy comfort, tell to very few. But the rest of my promise touching the changes of the Beloved, how He now manifests Himself openly, now draws aside, thou shalt receive from Himself, and hear from His own mouth.

XVII

OF THE ANSWER OF THE BELOVED, AND HIS WITHDRAWAL

“MARVELLOUS are Thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well.”

Why, my Beloved, hast Thou so dealt with me? Why hast Thou forsaken me? Answer me. Thou didst leave me, and go away. But now at last Thou hast returned to me, and in this Thou hast done well. Hadst Thou not returned, I had well-nigh fainted away. But Thou, knowing my secrets, hadst mercy upon me. For I was sorrowful at Thy departure, but am now comforted with Thy return. Tell me, however, something for my instruction, what was the profit thou intendedst herein? What good is it for thee to fly away and afflict me? Doth it delight Thee to hear me cry: “Abide with us, LORD, for it is towards evening.”

Come and sit in the midst of us, because I and another disciple long much to hear Thee, and pray Thee to teach us. Speak freely, whatsoever Thou pleasest; and if Thou wilt, address Thy words unto me. For there is none whom I would more gladly hear than Thee. And if any other speak, his discourse is the more pleasant and agreeable unto me, for Thy sake, Who speakest in him. Thy words will be sweeter to me than the honey, or the honeycomb, because they surpass all sweetness of words. Let now Thy voice sound in my ears.

2. Then the voice of my Beloved intoned and said:

I am He that speak in righteousness. Who is like unto Me in counsel and wisdom? Who made the sea and dry land? I the LORD, Who formed the light, and created the darkness. Who hath entered the abyss, and hath brought up water from the deep? I the LORD, the searcher of hearts and reins. Who hath known all things, both first and last? I the LORD, Who

made all things in number, weight, and measure. I am the Maker of heaven and earth, the Ruler of all ages.

I know all secret things, and reveal what is hidden. I embrace all things, and behold the causes of each. I am GOD, and change not: with Whom the causes of all wondrous things stand immutable.

I am the Almighty GOD, Whose power passeth all knowledge. I am the Most High, Whose height is unattainable. I am Goodness, Whose Being is incommunicable. I am ever present, yet the most concealed. I am the most inward, and yet most removed from the senses. I hear all things without trouble, and rule all without dissension. All things past and to come are before my sight as the present. I alike excel all bodily and spiritual creatures. I am called by many names, yet am conformable to none even in thought. I suddenly appear, and ere it is known, again as suddenly disappear. Verily I am a GOD that hideth Himself, and then do I manifest My dispensations to them that love Me.

3. I said also to the loving soul:

I will hide My face from her for a little while: for a moment I will leave her, to see whether she loveth Me purely. It is a great matter to love purely, for this is to love Me, not on account of herself, nor for any temporal advantage nor even spiritual consolation; but solely for my own sake, and herself finally for love of Me, and not for aught to be hoped from Me.

It is not the lot of all so to love Me; but this prerogative of pure love belongs only to the most perfect soul. But that which is still imperfect must needs be tried, and exercised; that she may know how much she loves, and if she has reached contempt of self. Thou saidest in thy heart, "I love truly," and again and again didst thou repeat—"I love." But I trust not in words, or thoughts only; therefore in truth I will try thee.

4. When I am present and speak fair words unto thee; when I give devotion, or increase my gifts in thee; when all is prosperous, or for the most part, smooth, then thou devoutly sayest: "My Beloved, I love Thee." And thou sayest well: For I am indeed most worthy of thy love; and all that can be said or thought of Me is lovely and sweet, and worthy of everlasting praise. But for thee to love and praise Me for good things, what great thing is this? For even so do the sinners. Nay, they often bless Me, when they have received the objects of their evil desires. But praise is not seemly in

the mouth of a sinner. Whoso then loves Me for a benefit, or consolation, what does he more than the covetous wordling?

Advance, advance, and ascend unto perfection. Be ashamed to be always weak, and callow; learn to feed on strong meat, and to be no more fed with the milk of babes. Pass over to the number of the mighty men of David, who hold the spear, and sword, and shield. Take up thy Cross, and follow me. Haste to be reckoned among those, who burn for my sake to bear tribulation, and many kinds of privations.

Thou lookest too much for comfort. Therefore I will try thee, and bend thee another way, that thou mayest know what thou art able to suffer, lest thou seem to thyself innocent and holy. I will visit thee with tribulation, and wrath, and indignation, and attacks of evil angels. Some shall take away what is thine; and some shall deny what thou needest. Some shall revile thee; others oppose thee face to face. Some shall lay a heavy yoke upon thee; others lead thee whither thou wouldest not. Some shall afflict thee without, others within. Others shall be raised to state and honours, while thou shalt be left to contumely, and labours. In all these, and greater than these, shalt thou be tried, like a mighty wrestler. I will retire, yet will not dismiss thee till I have proved diligently whether thou blessest Me, to My face only. But if thou lovest Me with all thy heart, and blessest My name at all times, then thou art worthy to be called My Spouse, and to be admitted into my secret chamber.

But if thou canst not yet bear My rod, and thinkest this discipline severe, bemoaning over many days My absence, though thou unceasingly and lovingly seekest Me, I will send thee My staff that thou mayest rise; and after this I will come, and thou shalt be restored to former grace. For I would not have thee faint altogether, for the soul that loveth Me, I also love. And if thou lovest not perfectly, yet I despise not thee as being a little one; but will provide for thy increase. Thy well-being is My care: wherefore I would not have thee perplexed on account of Me.

5. I know, indeed, what thou art able to bear, and so temper My visitations; I would not have thee tempted beyond what thou canst bear, and fall away. If I tarry, wait for Me and abide the day of visitation. I will verily come and make good My promise. But be thou instant in prayer, diligent in holy reading, and in all things show forth patience and endurance. For I am not ignorant that during My absence thou hast been in sorrow; but I am not

pleased that thou art so soon cast down, and abandonest all hope, as if I would not return. Where is thy faith? In this chiefly hast thou need of much faith; for although thou seest Me not, thou art seen by Me, to Whom thou shouldst trust thyself, and all that thou hast. For, although thou knowest not My judgments, yet the language of firm faith saith, “Whatever GOD disposes and doeth is good.” I tell thee, then, for thy comfort, that this sickness is not unto death, but to the glory of GOD. I took away the object of thy longing, and wished to try thy faith and love. All this I did that thou mightest know thine own weakness more clearly, and understand My goodness more. Thou knowest not thyself so well as I know thee. I know thee and all thine, not only in time, but from eternity. See, then, what it is that cometh to thee from Me; see how poor thou art in thyself when thou art left by Me. Thou hast not yet gone far enough in knowledge of thyself. And because this knowledge is good for thee, I wished thee to learn it by experience.

It is good for thee at times to be left, and afflicted, and humbled, that so thou mayest more palpably feel thy own weakness. I know that this tends most to thy advancement. And if thou art thus made more prudent and watchful in every particular, what hast thou lost? Thou art often self-confident and ignorant of thyself, thinking thou hast the good which thou hast not.

6. Thou art deceived by love of self, and forgetting the Giver, abusest the gift. I inebriated thee, but thou forgettest that it was a cluster of grapes from My Vine. Prove now thyself, and own what strength thou hast. If what thou hadst was of thyself, why dost thou not still keep it? In that thou couldst not do so, acknowledge that it came from above. Ascribe honour, then, to My grace, and confess that without Me thou canst do nothing. Reflect how needful I am to thee, how sufficient, and how I alone can confirm thee in all good. Where wast thou before I called thee, but in thy sins? And where art thou now, but whither I have led thee? Yea, when was it ever well with thee without Me?

7. And I said, “Never, dearest LORD. Thou art my One, mine only One, my Beloved, most faithful in all, and above all.”

Why, then, didst thou think evil with thyself, to go after other lovers? What wast thou displeased at in Me? Was it My Glory, or My Beauty?

“Truly, O LORD, there is none in heaven, or on earth, like unto Thee, in beauty and glory, in riches and power. Thou alone art the most high above all creatures. The heavens are Thine; the earth also is Thine. Thou hast laid the foundation of the round world, and all that is therein. Much hast Thou given to the creatures. In them Thy great beauty, wisdom, and goodness shine forth; but then it is nothing in comparison with Thy blest and glorious Presence. Now have I learnt, by experience, that it is a bitter thing for me to have left Thee but for an hour.”

8. Return then to Me, says my Beloved. It is enough that thou hast hitherto wandered away to and fro. Learn henceforth to be steadfast and gentle, hoping and trusting in Me, not only in the day of My visitation, but more fully in the night of temptation. I left thee, that so being wearied thou mightest more quickly return to Me; and, cheated of outward comfort, mightest at length learn how great a boon is My love, to which I have so many times invited thee. Understand, now, that it is not without reason that thou art sometimes left; that thou remainest without devotion—art afflicted with weariness—worn down by temptations—afflicted on all sides—and that thou findest no counsel, discoverest no aid, but sufferest on every hand distress and want. I leave thee, that thou mayest learn how needful My presence is for thee, not only in one thing, or even in great matters, but in every action, in every place and time, in the morning as in the evening, and wherever thou art, or wherever thou mayest go or remain. Thus wilt thou be taught to walk more warily with thy Beloved, to abstain from vanities, and guard against offences.

9. I leave thee that thou mayest know how much thou lovest Me—that the measure of thy love may appear to thee as it is. Thou didst think thyself stronger and happier than thou wert; but it became clear when My aid was withdrawn for a little, that thou wast poor and miserable. How could thy love be known unless thou bearest sufferings with meekness? Sometimes I see thee become lukewarm, and that thou mayest be aroused to fervour and diligence in seeking Me, I hide myself for a little while, as a Lover at the door. I see and know all things; but trial is useful in many ways, and often gives greater knowledge. If thou lovest Me, thou wilt not be slow in seeking me. If I am pleasing to thee, thou wilt search more eagerly.

Knowest thou not that wealth won by toil is tended with greater care? Who longs for rest so much as the weary traveller? To whom is love so

pleasant as to him who has known what it is to grieve for the Beloved? Is not a treasure that is lost and found again more dear than before? Therefore is thy joy double, and thy gladness twofold, because of the intermitted presence of the Beloved.

For thy good, then, I withdraw Myself; and this not in anger, but with a gracious dispensation I sport, as it were, with them that love Me. Let this suffice thee for the present, since so much thou hast deserved to hear. But I give thee leave to return to Me, as oft as thou feelest My need. I have never closed My bowels of compassion to the humble and devout suppliant.

XVIII

OF CONFIDENCE IN DIVINE MERCY

“MY GOD is my mercy, and therefore I am not confounded.”

Let none deem it strange that I desire so frequently to hold converse with the LORD my GOD, since His loving kindness often draws me on, slothful though I am, and inflames me to prayer and meditation, so that for me not to answer His words would be harsh and ungrateful.

But haply some one may object, Dost thou not then fear GOD, since thou art in truth an unclean sinner, and unworthy even of life? Whence cometh this presumption of heart? And since thou art the least of all, and more to be despised than all, why dost thou still thrust thyself forward into Divine discourse, and whom takest thou thyself to be.

2. O LORD, my Beloved, answer for me, because the mouth of the sinner is opened against me. If I would justify myself, my mouth will condemn me; and if I should shew myself clean, my soul should prove me wicked. Thou knowest my foolishness and confusion; speak Thou, and I will willingly hold my peace.

And the voice of my Beloved answered and said,

“Heed not the words of them that upbraid thee, but listen rather to what I have said, ‘I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.’ Can I not do what I will? Who shall resist My will? If I choose to confer any benefit upon thee, though the least of My disciples, who will convict Me of sin? Let him that is without sin cast the first stone at thee. And if they also are sinners, why do they detract from My grace? Thou didst not choose Me, but My mercy hath prevented thee.

“Dare any still murmur against thee because thou hast come unto Me; surely their murmurings are not against thee, but openly against Me,

because I receive sinners and eat with them. And why shouldest thou not claim such fellowship when I more gladly give than withdraw?"

3. And I said to Him, "Beloved LORD, impute it not unto them, but to me and my sins. I deny not that for which they have spoken evil of me, but I confess that it is even worse than they know."

He again said, "It is good for thee that thou hast humbled thyself, for thereby thou shalt be the more enriched, and shalt more readily obtain My grace. Nor shall thou be cast away because thou art a sinner and weak, though thou oughtest on that account to despise thyself, and never cease to remember in how many things thou hast failed. But lest over anxiety oppress thee, consider how often I make of sinners neighbours and friends, choosing the humble, and leaving the self-confident far off. I demand not of thee aught that is thine, but this only I ask, love Me with a pure heart, and it is enough."

And I said, "Alas me! that I have nothing to offer worthy of Thy love."

And He replied, "I need none of those things which the world brings to please Me. I require none such. Love of itself is enough, only let it glow, and continue with Me. And what are the things that can adorn a man? Are they not all mine, whether they shine in the body or in the soul? Moreover as for those things that belong to the world, and adorn the body, these should concern thee but little. But those which belong to the beauty of virtue concern thee, and should be thy care, that thou mayest walk well pleasing before GOD in the light of the living. Rightly, however, hast thou humbled and accused thyself both outwardly and inwardly in the presence of My Majesty, by confessing in truth thy weaknesses and sins, and bitterly lamenting them; for thou art not worthy to claim familiar converse with Me, Who am a mirror without spot, and thou a sinner, and unclean from infancy. Remember then thy frail condition and My noble greatness, and so with humble reverence come confidently unto Me. For I am He that blotteth out sins and iniquities, and justifieth the ungodly, pardoning all his sins for My Name's sake.

4. "Nor are those the whole of my benefits, for I am prepared to bestow still greater gifts of mercy. For I choose to show mercy rather than to be angry, willing to spare rather than to punish. But this seemeth too little for Me, and I am not content after the first grace but to add a second and third, nay, My mercies are without end, and the number of My graces and benefits

cannot be told. In a word, after the pardon of sinners, after their penitence and full satisfaction, I oftentimes restore the joy of My saving countenance, by pouring out the more abundant grace of the HOLY SPIRIT. And although the sinner still continue in the flesh, yet I receive him into My friendship, so that there be no confusion felt for past sins, but rather thanksgiving and the voice of praise, because old things have passed away and all become new.

“So compassionate and merciful am I, that I am ever more ready to pardon than thou to repent; more ready to give than thou to ask. Why then fearest thou? Why dost thou tremble to approach the fountain of so much mercy? And why dost thou estrange thyself from My grace so freely bestowed? Nay, even though thou knewest that I intended to deny thee, thou shouldest not cease from prayer, nor despair of being heard, but rather persevere more instantly until thou receivest. For My mercies are infinite, and what is denied at one time may be given at another.

5. “How knowest thou but that I may at length turn My face unto thee, and grant thee the desire of thy heart? What saith the Prophet of Me, ‘Draw near unto Him and be enlightened, and your face shall not be ashamed.’ I rather blame thee for coming so seldom, rather than for the frequency of thy approach, thy timid modesty more than thy too great confidence of pardon. To trust in my goodness is a proof of true humility and of great faith. I say this that thou mayest not sin, and if thou hast sinned, despair not, but quickly rise again; for thou still hast hope, and an Advocate with the FATHER.

“Wouldest thou wait to be worthy before thou drawest nigh? But how of thyself couldst thou become so? If only the good and worthy, the great and perfect were to draw nigh to Me, what would become of the sinners and publicans? For what says the Gospel? ‘And the publicans and sinners drew near to JESUS to hear Him.’ Let then the unworthy draw near that they may become worthy, the wicked that they may be made good, the little and imperfect that they may become great and perfect. Let each and all come that they may receive of the fulness of the living fountain.

“I am the Fountain of Life that cannot be exhausted. Whoso thirsts, let him come to Me and drink; whoso hath nothing, let him come and buy without price; whoso is sick, that he may be made whole; whoso is lukewarm, that he may be inflamed; whoso is fearful, that he may be

strengthened; whoso is sorrowful, let him come to be consoled; whoso is dry, let him come to be filled with the richness and fulness of the Spirit; whoso is wearied, let him come to be refreshed with joy.

“Behold, it is My delight to be with the sons of men. Whoso desireth wisdom, let him come to My teaching; whoso longeth for riches, let him come to receive eternal and incorruptible; whoso is ambitious of honours, let him come to inherit an eternal inheritance in Heaven; whoso longeth for happiness, let him come that he may possess it without fear and danger; whoso yearns for an abundance of all good things, let him come to Me to enjoy the sovereign, eternal, and infinite good.

“I am He that giveth all temporal goods, and more than that I give eternal good in the heavenly kingdoms. Nor shall I fail in My promise to any one whose saving observance of My commands hath been fully kept. Whoso hath rightly striven in this world, shall be gloriously crowned in Heaven.”

XIX

OF LONGING FOR DIVINE ENJOYMENT

“LET the meditation of my heart be always before Thee.”

What can be sweeter, or more pleasant to the faithful soul, than to meditate devoutly on the LORD GOD, her Beloved, Whom though she cannot as yet behold in clear and beatific vision, she may at least make as present by zealous remembrance.

Let her then contemplate as though in a glass darkly, Whom she cannot yet see face to face. Let her nevertheless search for Him in Scriptures, and similitudes, Whom she cannot contemplate in His own brightness.

Oh! that her zeal in seeking the face of the LORD would never grow cold in me, but grow more fervent day by day! The soul that loves GOD, burns unceasingly to enjoy the vision of Him: because the vision of GOD is highest bliss, and perfect happiness. She longs therefore for this beatitude, until all her longing, united to its end, is satisfied and appeased; since she cannot rest content with any present good.

For she hath learnt by frequent experience, that the more she wanders from heavenly bliss, the more and more she is unhappy and disquieted; since there is nothing steadfast, and lasting in creatures, by which her craving can be relieved.

2. Let her return then to Him by Whom she was made; and seek for bliss from Him, from Whom she had her origin; for He, Who created the soul, alone can satisfy her longings with good things. For such is her love, that when He is taken away there is no good in which she can rest contented; no pleasure which she can safely enjoy.

Tarry not here then, O my soul, for this is not the place of thy rest; but rise upwards and ascend to Him that made thee.

Even He Who hath already sent His messengers, and invites thee to return to Him. The longings for eternal life He hath implanted are so many messengers unto thee; and when thou hast received them, gird thee and prepare to walk. Thou walkest, when thou longest to see Him; when thou strivest to please Him; when thou renoucest things below; when for love of Him thou doest what is to be done, or doest not what is to be left undone. For thou couldst not have sought Him unless He had first sought thee, and awakened holy desires within thee. For in truth that soul languishes, not with love, but deadly weariness, which hath not been irradiated with the warmth of the Eternal Sun. But when the south wind sweetly blows, then she will be thawed from cold and sorrow; then with longings for the inspired Light, she begins to burn for the secret of incomprehensible Divinity.

3. O wondrous heat of the true Sun, what glowings dost thou beget in the loving soul! Thou dissipatest the darkness of sorrow, and changest laborious toil as if it had not been. By one simple gleam Thou comfortest long nights and days of poverty. O medicine of the sorrowful, Thou bright lamp to those that err and stray, shine Thou constantly upon me; take up Thy abode with me till the everlasting light breaks forth in me! O how sweet and pleasant shall be Thy presence, since from Thy remembrance only so many joys arise! How gladly would I turn unto Thee! how freely renounce all, that I may deserve to be comforted with Thy grace. For it will be no hard task for the soul longing to see Thy face, to strip itself of all delight in present things, since she already feeleth a greater pleasure within, or waiteth with confidence for still greater to be bestowed on her.

4. Let none foolishly suppose that Thou wilt long leave the devout soul without consolation; or that it shall receive but little gifts of grace, for all her victories over nature; since no earthly delight, of whatsoever character, or that can be conceived even in thought, can be compared, for quality or quantity of sweetness, with Thy heavenly consolation. Labour then, O faithful soul, so to present thyself to CHRIST the Heavenly Bridegroom, that thou mayest be ever worthy of His Grace, and consolation; since by Him and in Him thou shalt find that most fully, which will comfort thee in every strait. The more constantly thou drawest nigh, and pressest the more closely to His side, the sweeter and more pleasant will He be. But if thou

withdrawest thyself, thou alone wilt suffer loss; while He, remaining alone in His beauty, shall feel no sorrow nor trouble.

Thou standest in need of His goodness, not He of yours. Therefore thou mayest be made happier by Him: but verily not He by thee. He alone is self-sufficient, the only One to Whom nothing can be added, and from Whom nothing can be taken away. By His grace are all things that live, feel, or understand. And therefore it is meet that all things that have being should bless and praise Him.

5. O, if I could tell and explain Him to thee fully, how gladly would I do so! But that which is ineffable cannot be expressed as it really is. So also what is inconceivable is truly grasped by no thought or words. And though this be so, yet meanwhile in thy human capacity meditate on thy Creator, consoling thyself with the remembrance of His sweetness, until He show thee the presence of His countenance in His Heavenly Kingdom.

XX

OF THE SOUL'S LONGING FOR GLORY

“I SAID in mine haste, I am cut off from before Thine eyes.”

My heart is smitten within me because of the delay of Thy glory. I will speak then and commune with Thee in the bitterness of my soul. The strength of Thy love constraineth me to speak, and suffers me not to hide anything from Thee. What then shall I say? “Behold, my GOD, in peace my bitterness is most bitter.”

Whoso understands not, knoweth not what these words mean. Not so I; but I both know and feel them, and therefore am not ashamed to sing with the Prophet to Thee, the LORD my GOD. I speak to Whom all things are known; Who also in Thy good pleasure hast given me to know and understand, lest haply I should glorify myself overmuch, or be esteemed as something by the foolish.

I can unfold to Thee what I have received from Thee. But what need have I to tell Thee, since Thou knowest all things, and lookest for aid from none? And what kind of consolation can come to Thee, Who art the Comforter of the desolate? Therefore it can profit me alone, who yet have need of the comfort of words; that by good and sweet words I may quicken my love towards Thee, and gain some refreshment for my desolate soul.

For since I cannot behold Thee present, I will mourn Thy absence; even as that is a sign of love, and very soothing to the loving soul. Now the meaning of this verse begins to appear, because it is well written of the loving soul. For the more ardently she loves, and the more vehemently she yearns for things eternal, the more truly does she feel the force of these few words within her.

They are not cold words but to him that loveth not, nor is it a silent lute but to the callous heart. The loving and burning soul knoweth them; and her heart is warm within her as oft as she is inflamed with love of eternal peace. Therefore does she speak to Thee, the LORD her GOD, and not to men to whom she desires to be unknown.

And if at times she speaks to men, they hear but what is audible to the ear; but whenever she speaketh to Thee, she speaketh inwardly and in love rather than in words. Behold, she saith, in peace my bitterness is most bitter. As if she confessed in this wise: Since, through Thy gift, I have been restored to peace of mind, the deceitful condition of this world becomes more grievous unto me. For in this peace I see how far apart I am from supreme peace. And, indeed, formerly filled with earthly desires, and wrought upon by various passions, I was much hindered from my inner self, and thereby from the contemplation of heavenly things, for which I should have mourned; and yet I could not, because through carelessness I had lost the sense of inward sorrow. But now, when the throng of vain thoughts has been stilled, I rest a little in peace of mind, and with all the desire of my heart am drawn to things above; yet still I mourn, for that I enjoy not heavenly goods, yea more than I did grieve when I was tormented by the evils of the world.

2. It is bitterness for my soul to dwell in this world, and walk under the burden of sin. But this is most bitter, when having collected my affections as best I can, on One alone, I enjoy blest peace of heart, and when with all my might I run into the embraces of eternal peace, yet I am prevented from attaining to it, on account of the bonds of this mortality. And therefore I am compelled to cry unto Thee with mourning, and say: O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

I feel no heavier burthen than being so long a pilgrim from Thee in this world; in that glowing with love, I seek no consolation besides Thee. For I have learnt by most certain experience that my soul cannot be satisfied with the good things of this present life, nor attain to true bliss, until united to Thee she shall be received into a heavenly mansion. For although whilst in the body she may love exceedingly, and burn and contemplate; yet unsatisfied are her affections, till she has put off the flesh. Therefore in the attainment of the Chief Good only, and in the light of Thy countenance, is her end consummated.

3. O King of Heaven, lovely beyond all; O my Beloved most beautiful, and most to be desired, when wilt Thou fill me with joy, with Thy countenance? When wilt Thou satisfy all my longings from Thy eternal fountain? My soul hath thirsted for Thee, and is troubled with manifold sorrow, in that she has not attained to Thee. As long as I am in the flesh, and see Thee not, all I look upon brings me sadness. My heart grows warm within me, so that, not once but continually, in my transport I say: “When shall I come, and appear before the face of my GOD?”

Yet still my love increases, my longings burn more strongly, so that I cease not to weep day and night, when day by day I think, “Where is my GOD?” For sweet is it to the loving soul to weep for Thee when she cannot have that for which she longs, but can only wait and weep. The loving soul is more fed and comforted by such tears than if she had all earthly things; for if she loved these she would not weep at all for Thee.

4. Oh! how blessed and well-pleasing to Thee is the pouring out of such tears, since in truth they are the destroyers of worldly joys, and temporal lusts, and the devout purchasers of heavenly consolations. Wherefore this overflow of holy tears is a token of the specially devout and loving only. But far different cause for tears have they who are constrained thereto by wretched necessities. This one weeps because he is sick, another because he is oppressed, another because he is injured, and another because his will is thwarted. Thou alone, O devout soul, sheddest the tears of Divine Love; but as regards temporal losses and transitory causes, thou leavest all to the true judgment of GOD, and givest GOD thanks.

Let none however of the indevout, seeing thee weeping, judge thee foolish or impatient, in that these tears do not oppress but refresh—do not stain but cleanse; nor are they hurtful to the eyes, in that they purify the eyes of the heart. Let others think what they will of thee, I cannot think otherwise but well of thee, for I would drink large draughts of such tears.

5. If (saith He) thou wouldest weep with Me, thou mayest also be comforted with Me.

6. Would that thy soul were as mine, then thou wouldest be ignorant no more of what I feel. I know in whom I have believed, and am convinced that it is easier to deny the existence of heaven and earth than that of GOD. Yea, I know that He is the GOD of my soul, and that I can never be happy without perfect contemplation of Him, and since this is not yet bestowed

upon Me, nor confirmed for ever, I grieve that I am deprived of so great a blessedness, that I am still surrounded by the darkness of life, and so weighed down by my own infirmity that I cannot endure that light; and that whatever I meditate of the heavenly glory, lasts for so short a moment, and is so clouded.

7. Wherefore I often repeat my mourning in the place of song, and when they daily say unto me, Where is thy GOD? my spirit is more and more pierced within me. For in anxious suspense I say, where is my good and the perfect joy of my heart? where peace and true rest? where all these ineffable goods but in my GOD? And when shall I enjoy them but when united to Him, and there is none between? And when shall I be there? I believe and hope, but possess not.

Where then is my GOD Whom I so love, and as yet see not; Whose love so often wounds me, Whose absence saddens me, and Whose visitation but now and then refreshes me? Where is my GOD, Whom once to have seen is to have learnt all things? Where is my GOD in Whom my heart and flesh long continually to exult? Where is my GOD, for Whom I endure so many labours and sorrows? the remembrance of Whom is sweet, but Whose dearer presence banisheth all sadness from the heart. Where is my hope and the object of all my glorying? Are they not in Thee, my GOD, the health of my countenance?

Show me Thy glory, turn not Thy face from Me, and I will cease to complain. If I contend somewhat with Thee, rebuke me not, for love that is strong hath many wonderful ways. I am forced to wait, and thereby the more driven on by desire for Thee, and thus the combat of love still continues.

XXI

OF THE REMEMBRANCE OF THE HEAVENLY COUNTRY

“LORD, I have loved the beauty of Thine House and the habitation of Thy glory.”

How gladly I would be with Thee, Thou knowest well my GOD; and how ardently I long for it, I cannot sufficiently declare. I wish not this only when it is ill with me; but however well it is with me, still my desire is to be with Thee alone.

But how shall my longing be satisfied? For me to be here is wearisome, —yet I must remain; I long to be with Thee, yet I may not. Nothing remains then but for me patiently to endure this delay, and resign myself to Thy will. For should I repine, when Thou wouldst have it so? Oh! God forbid, since many saints whose hearts were in Heaven, have still endured a long sojourn in this world. If Thou wilt then to prolong my pilgrimage here, I will obey, however long it pleaseth Thee. But yet that my desire of eating with Thee may be more pleasant during its period of expectation, I would within myself meditate a little on the heavenly mansion. Yet I presume not to penetrate into the least of those joys, which Thou hast prepared for them that love Thee; but a little here and there I will gather for meditation, that my affection, oft weighed down and infected by earthly things, may be again excited and uplifted to the hope of life eternal.

2. Oh! if that day would but dawn in which the joys of Heaven should carry me away. How joyful should I then be, and how happy count myself! How blest should I doubtless be in steadfast peace! There would then be no need to search into any thing, for no secrets would be hid.

But now my life is spent in the night, so that it is no wonder if my eye is dark amidst the clouds of glory. Yet will I lift up my eyes, looking afar off,

and salute that Holy city Jerusalem, which is built in Heaven of living stones, that is of Angels and Holy men, ever full of praise and joyful song, praising GOD unceasingly.

Ah! now, my soul, take the wings of thy longings, and rise upwards; flee from the bodily senses: haste from the visible things of this world, to the holy habitation of GOD, to the new Jerusalem, established in perpetual peace, crowned with glory and honour, and perfect in the abundance of all good things.

3. Behold things wonderful and ineffable, which it is not lawful for man to utter. The sense does not grasp, nor does human understanding comprehend how glorious GOD is in His saints, how wonderful in His Majesty. Extend thy thoughts even to the highest: dilate thy longings to everlasting eternity, and say with the Prophet, “Glorious things are spoken of Thee, holy city of GOD.” There all that is longed for is won! yea, securely possessed. There GOD is seen face to face, clearly and not darkly; not hastily, nor for a time, but clearly without end. There is recognised the blessed and glorious TRINITY, and inseparable Unity, and adoration, praise, and benediction is given by all the citizens of Heaven.

There too, is the only One, the Beloved, more precious than all riches, that desirable treasure, my LORD JESUS CHRIST, the immortal Bridegroom of the Church; in Whom are all the treasures of the wisdom and knowledge of GOD, hidden from the world, but manifest to the blessed. Oh! how joyous are all saints in the presence of the Saint of saints, Who is the cause and origin of their salvation. For there He speaks not to them in parables, but declareth openly to them of the FATHER; Himself their book, the Word from the beginning with GOD, teaching them, and fulfilling all things, so that there is nothing wanting to them in glory. Oh! blessed everlasting glory, which springs not from brief remembrance, but the Presence of GOD in the splendour of His saints.

4. There also is the most glorious Mother of GOD, the ever Virgin Mary, adorning the whole Heavenly court with her appearance and beauty; surrounded and attended by troops of virgins, like the flowers of roses, and lilies of the valley. There are Angels and Archangels in their several orders set, sedulously intent in Divine praises; of whom some are highest, some midst, some lower, divided according to their Hierarchies.

There are the Patriarchs and Prophets of old, who full of the HOLY GHOST sang beforehand of the coming of CHRIST, and now acknowledge and bless with ceaseless praises that same LORD JESUS CHRIST Himself, King of kings, the true GOD. Now they look upon their Redeemer face to face, Whom they had long looked for, and for Whose coming they had yearned with all their heart.

There are the illustrious and ever to be remembered preachers of CHRIST, the Apostles and Disciples of our Lord, filled with sanctity and grace, the founders of the Catholic Faith, but now the devout intercessors in eternal glory for those, whom they begat and instructed in the faith.

5. There in chief shines forth the venerable Baptist of CHRIST, John, the especial friend of the Bridegroom. There Peter, the Heavenly Key-bearer, Paul, the illustrious Doctor, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, James, and John, with the rest of the Apostles and Evangelists, the pillars of the Churches, to hold whose faith, and to follow whose example, is the way to everlasting life.

There are the illustrious Martyrs, empurpled in their own blood, but happy for ever with CHRIST, who though their bodies were most cruelly torn, could not be separated by torments from CHRIST.

There is the celebrated company of Confessors, who despising the world were deemed worthy to inherit the heavenly kingdom. There are the great and glorious Doctors, who by a holy life, went deeply into the contemplation of GOD, by which so many have left behind the lively image of holiness in their writings.

There too, are young men and maidens, old men and children, constantly praising GOD together; and ascribing to the Divine Majesty whatever they have done that was good or virtuous, ever thankful, ever devout, ever happy, ever inflamed, never weary nor tired, but ever uplifted in the continual contemplation of GOD.

O! how glorious is that kingdom in which all the saints, clothed in their first robe, and secure for ever, reign with CHRIST. There they now follow the Lamb, whithersoever He goeth: for there is no separation from Him, but they shall rejoice for ever, joying for eternity in the LORD.

6. Contemplate these things, my soul, and raise up thy thoughts, beyond all things visible. Truly this is a holy place, and the LORD is in it. Here peace and joy ever abound: Here is a continual flow of all good things, and an eternal absence of evil. Oh! that thou couldst bear away somewhat of

the ineffable joys of the saints, that thereby thy pilgrimage might be comforted for a time; seeing that within me thou wilt here have only labours and sorrows, temptations, and the grief of the world. Oh! that the Author of the light from above would vouchsafe thee some little, and not send thee back empty to thy dry food; but according to the riches of His superabundant grace, would purify and free thee from all material things, and lead thee even for a moment to the abyss of His eternal light. Would that thou couldst bring back from that heavenly sanctuary, the form and pattern of true holiness, which thou mayest imitate. For better and truer are the examples of the heavenly and confirmed, than the best which are tried by earthly proof.

Grant me, then, O LORD GOD, to know and understand, what constitutes the perfect felicity of the saints, not from their writings, but by the HOLY SPIRIT, who teacheth thee in heavenly secrets, far above what human sense can attain. Grant me also to raise my life with greater fervour to spiritual things, and midst the constant weight of tribulations, to hold steadfastly the palm of patience; until the time come when, the debt of the flesh being paid, I may in Thy mercy attain to that bliss for which I long so ardently.

XXII

OF DRAWING NEAR UNTO CHRIST, THE HOLY OF HOLIES, THE KING OF ANGELS

“THOU art my King, and my GOD.”

Arise, my soul, come and enter the wonderful tabernacle, even the House of GOD. For thou must cast aside all else, and come with suppliant reverence to salute our LORD JESUS CHRIST, thy SAVIOUR and Redeemer, Who is above all principality and power, the Joy and Crown of all saints, the sure hope and certain expectation of all the faithful.

He it is Who made and redeemed thee; He laboured, and strove, and overcame for thee. He is thy advocate, and the propitiation for thy sins. He is thy Comforter, thy Preserver, and Guardian. He is thy only and chief one, this Beloved, Who feedeth among the lilies, and would rest upon thy bosom.

Who hath ever conferred such great boons upon thee? Who hath ever loved thee with so great a love? Approach, and give up thyself unto Him. Open thy heart to Him, and declare unto Him what thou hast so long carried within thee. None can better tell, or reveal to thee, what hope or counsel is fitting for thee in human affairs, which have such varying changes. Desire of Him to direct thy ways, and let them all repose in His counsels. For vain is the hope of men, but He is the steadfastness of peace. Through Him thou wilt have access to the FATHER, and by Him all grace is given unto thee, and increase of virtue imparted.

2. Whether thou art in sadness, or joy, ever have recourse unto Him; for He is the mirror of life and the model of righteousness. He is the never

failing light of the soul, the lover of purity, and the joy of the conscience. For His sake thou wilt readily learn to despise all objects of delight: for His sake all things that are bitter and displeasing will become endurable, yea, and borne for love of Him, shall rather bring thee pleasure. In a word, from Him, and by Him, and in Him are all things.

To Him above all should thy intentions, actions, words, reading, prayer, meditation, and thought be directed. By Him salvation is given unto thee, and life eternal prepared for thee. For Him thou wilt not fear to die, nor yet refuse to live; because thou shouldst trust in His faithfulness, and prefer nothing to His honour and love. Draw near then, now, and give thanks to thy Redeemer.

3. O JESUS, sweetest and lovely above all, be Thou most devoutly saluted, most highly praised, and now and for all eternity blessed above all. O most worthy JESUS, what honour can I ever pay unto Thee? or how return thanks unto Thee, Who hast shown such boundless mercies unto me? And could I find somewhat to offer unto Thee, was it not Thine before I gave it? What then shall I render? I have little or nothing, and can I sacrifice out of nothing?

Yet receive the sacrifice of my humility, poverty, and nothingness; and be all ascribed to Thee, which Thou hast been pleased to bestow upon me. Let the choirs of the angels, that minister continually before Thee, utter also great praises for me.

4. Let all the spirits of just men speak, repeating thy praise with highest jubilee. But what still can I do, in remembrance and praise of Thy most holy Name? Much should I do; yea I am held and bound in many things, but scarcely am I sufficient for the least. Therefore, O most sweet JESUS, I will read, and write, and sing of Thee. I will think of Thee, speak of Thee, work for Thee, suffer for Thee. I will rejoice in Thee, praise, magnify, and glorify Thee.

For it is meet that I should adore Thee, for Thou art my GOD, in Whom I have believed, Whom I have loved, Whom I have sought after and desired for. Give me a sign for good, that mine eye may behold the beauty of Thy countenance in Heaven. I throw myself humbly at Thy feet, earnestly intreating Thy clemency with tears, until Thou deignest to have mercy upon me. Let my name be written in the book of life, and let not that be ever blotted out which Thy hand hath written there.

5. Unhappy me, and most unlike to Thy deserving saints, yet do I, trusting in Thy boundless merits, implore that I may be worthy at least to be reckoned among the weakest and lowest members of Thy elect. I know that my life and conversation are not such, that I may dare to place any confidence in myself; but all my hope and consolation consist and rest on the merits of Thy precious Blood, on which I wholly throw myself, with all that I have done, sinned, merited, and left undone.

Look, then, most merciful JESUS, on my poverty and want; mark the affections of my heart, which I bear towards Thee; not because I am worthy, but because Thou art gracious, and disdainest not to be touched and loved by sinners. My impurity affrights me, but again Thy goodness and humility draw and allure me unto Thee; Who of very charity consentedst not only to become man, but also for sinful man to suffer, die, and be buried. Therefore to Thee I flee for refuge, for in myself I find no good. Do Thou supply in me, what my own strength is little able to perform.

6. Thou hast made me long to salute Thee, to praise Thee, to bless Thee; for Thou art my hope, and my portion in the land of the living.

The desire of my soul is to be with Thee in the Kingdom of Heaven; but because my time has not yet come I will wait for Thee even until evening. Meanwhile, be this my comfort in the place of my pilgrimage, that I am mindful of Thy name, and Thy surpassing love; and that I have Thee present in faith, and in the Sacraments of the Church. It would be insupportable for me to live in this world, unless my hope were in Thee, O LORD. For I cannot rejoice with the world; and lest I remained without consolation and joy, I have resolved to place all my joy in Thee.

Much and oft should I go astray, and far and wide should I waver in my thoughts, if I kept not Thee in my remembrance and imagination. And in that I cannot conceive the greatness of Thy Divinity, nor understand Thine incorporeal verity, it is safer for me to turn to the actions and words of Thy humanity: because meditating on these things, I withdraw not altogether from Thy Divinity. Thanks to Thee, good JESUS, sweet and loving, because Thou hast deigned to become my brother, my bone, and my flesh.

XXIII

OF BEING THANKFUL FOR BENEFITS

“BLESSED be the Name of the LORD for ever.”

May all be done to Thy service, O LORD my GOD—whatsoever I do, whether I read or write; whether I think, or speak, or understand. Let all my works begin and end in Thee, by Thee, and for Thee. What Thou hast given, receive again; and whence the rivers have sprung, thither let them return. Never is it better or sweeter for me, than when I simply attribute to Thee whatever I have said and done that is good.

I would fain return Thee thanks, and this I truly do, when all that is done and all that I have received I ascribe to Thee, and wholly to Thee. But what can I, a wicked and slothful servant, give back to Thee? My service were nothing, even though I do all that Thou hast commanded me. Wherefore I am reduced to nothing, and humbled in very deed. Well is it for me that Thou hast humbled me, that Thou alone mayest be justified, Thou alone praised by all; and that most vile dust may never boast itself before Thee. Yet I will not cease from this, but desire to praise Thee with heart and voice; for though I cannot do it worthily, it is yet wrong to be silent altogether, and make no acknowledgement unto Thee. Thou, my GOD, art my praise; my song is ever of Thee.

2. Oh! how would he, who knew even little of Thy glory, and what it is to glory in Thee, regard as nothing all the blandishments of this world's glory! Oh! how quickly would all earthly delight wither up in him, who had tasted even a little of Thy sweetness! Oh! how would he burn, who had received but a little spark of Thy love! Yea, he would most gladly despise all things, that he might but cleave unto Thy love. And all that he could do and suffer for Thy love, would be indeed most sweet and light.

Oh! how he would rejoice, and how eagerly would he run after Thee, mindful of all Thy benefits! He would seek nothing more dear, profess nothing more blessed, follow nothing more eagerly, than to serve Thy love. For in loving Thee he would feel no burthen, for love beareth all burthens. And therefore those who complain of the burthen, prove that they are but little advanced in love. To serve Thee from love is indeed most pleasant, and a solace of toil. For love looks not to its own advantage, nor fears to suffer inconvenience; but seeketh in all things Thy good pleasure.

3. O how sweet a thing is Thy love, O CHRIST! How pleasantly it sounds! how sweetly it enters! how strongly does it hold, and how fast doth it bind! Oh! would that it might bind me for ever to Thy service, and wholly fill me, and make me subject to Him, nay, all His own. For then I am most free, when captivated by Thy love, and divested of, and estranged from all self-love.

I am Thy servant, O LORD; Thine, I say, whom Thou hast bought. I am freely Thine, nor ashamed to be not mine own. I wish not to have the disposal of myself; aid me that I may be free from all self-will. Do Thou breathe upon me, and enkindle; rouse up the little spark, and my heart shall burn, and become pure, and bright, and lovely: for Thy love banisheth all vice, and consumeth every sin. Do Thou keep fast the bonds of love, and so shall my poor service stand.

4. I know that my service bringeth no profit to Thee; yet it advantageth me to do what I know is grateful unto Thee. Would that I could do this, and not keep silence; that I could declare and not hide Thy works. For when shall I be worthy enough to meditate on all the benefits that Thou hast conferred upon me? Thou hast shown great mercy, O LORD, unto Thy servant; but I, alas! have not returned thanks unto Thee, as Thou hast richly deserved. And therefore have pains and sorrows of heart taken hold upon me, and I cannot repay Thy benefits, so many and so great.

Would that I could even once thank Thee worthily and entirely for them all. But what can come out from him, in whom there is nothing? From an empty vessel nothing can be poured forth. What then shall I do? I must give something, since none may appear empty before Thee; for Thou canst not bear ingratitude.

5. O that I were possessed of but one thing in the world which I could offer Thee, and which would be acceptable in Thy sight! What wouldest

Thou have, Beloved LORD? for doubtless Thou needest not my goods. Why demandest Thou then an offering from me? None is richer than Thou, and yet dost Thou ask something from me? I would (Thou saith) have thee wholly. For this is expedient for thee if thou wouldest deserve My grace. I will give thee grace, and thou shalt return Me thanks, and thus we will maintain a mutual and continual love between us. Give thyself to Me, and thou hast given all.

O JESUS, Fount of all Good, Fountain of Life, Fountain of Grace, Fountain of Sweetness, Fountain of Eternal Wisdom, now, most merciful, pour forth the gift of heavenly grace, and teach me ever to thank Thee, and above all to give myself up to Thee, because this is the dearest gift I can make. This I understand, and to this I agree. Take me, behold I am wholly Thine, and that I have is Thine. One thing there is I cannot give Thee; and what is that?

It is my sin which is all mine own, and is not therefore to be imputed unto Thee. Sin is all mine, and every failing in me is to be attributed to it alone; but unto Thee be glory and thanksgiving for all Thy benefits.

6. But now to bring them to remembrance I will call to mind a few of Thy benefits out of many, even such as move me and are most prominent. For time does not allow nor thought avail to search through all. Their number exceeds all measure, their greatness surpasses thought, and their worth is above all price. For they cannot be bought, in that they are freely given, and no return is asked but grateful thanks; but from the unthankful all shall be taken away.

7. First then I thank Thee, O LORD my GOD, Creator of all things, for that Thou hast deigned to create me a rational man, and surpassing all the works of Thy hands, to create in me a soul made after Thine own image and likeness. This is the first and great benefit given me of Thy free goodness. For I made not myself, but Thou madest me, introducing me into the world by the parents whom Thou madest to perform Thy will.

And behold I am more excellent in body than any other creature, and preferred above all beasts and fowls of the air, because made after the image of GOD, capable of eternal wisdom, and a partaker by nature of light uncreated and truth unchangeable.

For all therefore that I am, for life, and understanding, I return Thee unceasing thanks, wishing and praying that all creatures also in heaven and

on earth may praise and exalt Thy wonderful Name for ever. I bless Thee, O FATHER and LORD of heaven and earth, Who hast created all things out of nothing by Thy Only Begotten SON in the HOLY SPIRIT. Of Thy power and free will and not from any necessity hast Thou created all things to make Thy might known unto the sons of men; and well hast Thou disposed this visible world by Thy invisible wisdom coeternal with Thyself.

May every creature bless Thee and be subject to Thee in all things, and made to minister unto the human race. For when Thou commandest, the Heavens give rain at fitting seasons, and the earth bringeth forth fruit in abundance. The sun and the moon shine fair upon the earth, and the stars in their order move in the night season.

The fountains are full, the rivers flow, and fishes of divers kinds swim in the waters. The birds of the air fly through the heaven and sing, the goats, and the heifers, and the harts leap on the mountains. The sheep and all cattle rejoice in goodly pastures, and the different animals traverse the forests. The meadows are green, and the plains are decked with flowers, and all the trees of the woods put forth leaves and fruits. These are Thy works, O GOD, Who alone doest great wonders.

8. The second benefit shown me is the mystery of the Incarnation, the work of Redemption, and the price of our salvation, the special fruit of Thy Passion and Death. O mighty work of mercy, work of most excellent charity, of greatest humility, and of singular patience! Truly man deserved not this, this none of the Angels could accomplish, although the Prophets marvelled; this the Apostles saw and taught, this all the faithful have received, and this above all the elect love and worship.

This benefit fully considered inflames the desire, excites the heart, nourishes devotion, enlightens the mind, cleanses the affections, draws up to Heaven, withdraws from the world, leads and unites the soul to CHRIST. This gift is far above all measure greater than the former, yet He is One who hath made and given both unto us, even JESUS CHRIST, our LORD GOD.

For it would have profited me nothing to have been born into this world had I not been to be redeemed by the price of His precious Blood. Grace therefore came to my assistance, Thy divine mercy more and more increased, and plenteous redemption was poured forth, for when nature was corrupted it could never be repaired without the aid of its Creator.

O, FATHER of Mercies, and GOD of all consolation, Thou deliverest up Thy Son I to ransom a lost slave. O! wonderful condescension of mercy towards us, which neither men nor angels can ever unfold.

9. O most sweet JESUS, beginning and end of our salvation, Thou alone knowest, Thou alone canst bring aid to us who are wretched and condemned. For Thou deignedst to appear before man in the most humble and abject form of a servant, and from Thy sole pitying love alone receivedst the sentence of cruel death for us mortal worms. O JESUS, Fountain of goodness and mercy, Light of eternal light, and spotless mirror of the Majesty of GOD, inflame my heart by the meditation of this ineffable benefit which Thou plearest to confer on me and all the world. This benefit is general as was the first, and sufficient for the salvation of all, but the fruit thereof is not effectual to all because of the unbelief and wickedness of many. But it is indeed salutary and profitable to Thy elect for whom all things were created, and again made new in Thee, O JESU CHRIST!

O good JESU, how great benefits didst Thou bestow upon us in Thy humanity? Thou wast made our brother and our flesh, that we might be reputed the sons of GOD, and have access by Thee to the FATHER, Whose offended justice none could appease but Thou, of Whom Himself said, “This is My beloved SON, in Whom I am well pleased.”

Happy is the soul that diligently calls to mind, vehemently loves, and worthily reverences the sacraments of our redemption, and gives thanks to Thee for all, and trusts more to Thy will than her own weak sense. For none is able of himself to search out this mystery, nor is it grasped by human wisdom, but rather by the strength of faith and intuition of a pure heart is it enlightened from above. Blessed is he, who is worthy to receive through grace, what the wise men of the world could not learn by the light of nature.

O JESU, Wisdom of the FATHER, make me to understand in the light of faith this great and wondrous mystery of Thy Incarnation. Because in this lies all the sweetness of our salvation, the highest love abounds, and the fulness of Thy unsearchable wisdom shines forth.

Let Thy servant advance more and more in the increase of virtues, and the performance of good works, and be instructed more and more in the memorable secret of Thy Incarnation, and in the depths of Thy sacred passion, until I am altogether drawn onwards to Thy inner depths. For the manifestation of so great love and mercy is a very deep abyss, yea a divine

and vast ocean which cannot be passed over, and in which the spiritual fishes whom Thou hast inclosed in the net of faith, swim to and fro.

10. Oh! may such great love and sweetness, so great humility and kindness, ever live in my remembrance, and may somewhat of the mystery of the Incarnation and Passion appear and be intermingled in every sacrifice of prayer, and every exercise of devotion, to be offered as purest frankincense and most sweet balsam with a rich odour to GOD the FATHER. Let now those who have been redeemed of the LORD, whom He hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy, sing with me a canticle of Divine praise, and sing a hymn of mental rejoicing with thanksgiving unto Him. And let all the angels standing round the throne fall upon their faces, and adore the Lamb of GOD Who has taken away the sin of the world, saying,

Praise and honour belong unto Thee, O LORD. To Thee be ascribed blessing and honour, thanksgiving and the voice of praise,. power and might, majesty and wisdom, to Thee, our LORD GOD, JESUS CHRIST, for ever and ever. Amen.

11. The third benefit, not inferior to those that have gone before, is the grace of justification, by which Thou hast mercifully drawn me to conversion and amendment of life; bestowing upon me penitency for sins, the hope of pardon, and a resolve to do well, and serve Thee for ever.

Considering this, the blessed Apostle S. Paul exhorts his disciples not to be ungrateful for so great a benefit, but being mindful of the heavenly grace, to strive to return thanks worthy their high calling. “Ye see,” says he, “your calling, brethren: that not many wise men, not many mighty men are called; but GOD hath chosen the weak things of this world.”

These things I now consider in regard to myself, who, weak and contemptible in this world, have been snatched by Thy holy calling from this shipwreck, to be united with Thy fellowship of saints to serve Thee. And that I might not go back, I have freely bound myself with a vow, which, verily, I attribute not to my own merits, but to Thy Providence.

For this do I greatly praise and bless Thee, for that Thou hast vouchsafed to call me by Thy grace, to give me a good will, and to cast from me the burthen of sins. For Thou hast put me under Thy sweet yoke, softening my mind with the unction of Thy Spirit, Whom the world knoweth not, and seeth not, neither can understand. Preserve in me this good will, O merciful

LORD, and increase the gifts of Thy grace, as long as I am in this visible world.

I know that this calling is a great benefit, which is not given to all, but to those for whom it is prepared of the FATHER, since it is not of him that willeth or of him that runneth, but of GOD that showeth mercy, so that every mouth that speaketh vain things may be stopped, and every man be subject unto Thee, and that no flesh may glory in Thy sight, nor claim for itself anything as of its own merits, or good works. For hadst Thou dealt with me according to Thy justice, I should ere now have been numbered with those who are in hell. But Thy goodness, O LORD, hath spared me, and hast given me opportunity of pardon, that I might not become like the son of eternal perdition.

Therefore I am bound to render Thee greater praise for so mighty a benefit, and would that I could repay it in worthy words and acts all the days of my life! And I beseech Thee that for thanks Thou wouldst accept my poor services, by which I desire to deserve Thee, and which I offer to Thee out of love, that the bounden duty of my service may spring from the root of and finally tend to Thy good pleasure and honour; and that so my heart may be never turned away from love of Thee: but that my soul and body may flourish and persevere in Thy most holy service, as long as there is any breath within me, and I have any use of my senses or any remembrance of Thee.

May Thy praise never depart from my mouth nor the abundance of Thy benefits from my heart. But if Thy servant liveth many years—even if he were to live a hundred, or a thousand, yet may he not be lukewarm, or kept from serving Thee in humility and subjection; but I will as freely and devoutly serve Thee, as in that hour and day when my heart was first touched, and, strengthened by Thee, follow Thee, the only LORD, with pure and entire mind.

Nor shall any coming weakness or adversity hinder this my resolve; but as I now feel, and in Thy hearing, my GOD, propose, so also by Thy aid I desire to fulfil what has once gone out of my lips. But if this resolution be broken through any frailty or infirmity, since no man upon earth is so righteous as to live and sin not, yet will I not despair, nor let Thee go, but forthwith bend the knees of my heart, and with much contrition and tears, offer to Thee my sorrowful and wounded conscience, to be made whole

with the medicine of Thy grace, and to be fixed more strongly than before in the purpose I have taken. I will not repent of my good endeavour; nay, I will rather give thanks unto Thee, in that I have once been enabled to gain this much,—even my resolution to fight for ever under Thy banners.

Oh! Almighty and merciful GOD, Who createdst me out of nothing, and Who knewest from the beginning the weakness and fall of man, Thou canst most mercifully pardon all my transgressions, and make up all that I have left undone, restore all I have lost, heal the diseased, purify the unclean, enlighten such as are in darkness, bow down the lofty, rekindle the extinct, rebuild what was broken down, recover the negligent, reprove the depraved, level the uneven, restrain the curious, collect the scattered, compose the disordered, yea, change the whole condition of my mind for the better, that so my former resolve may fail in nothing; but that even the occasions of sin may co-operate for good to me, who am humbly prostrate at Thy feet. Lo! this is the change of the right hand of GOD Most High: this His heavenly visitation; this the manifold bestowal of His Divine mercy.

12. Accept also as a thank-offering all the devout services of the Holy Church, with the unanimous concord of all the heavenly court. And may all the saints from the beginning of the world, who have been enlightened and called by Thy grace, and may all faithful Christians of every people, and tongue, and nation who now are, and have been before us, and that shall come after us, celebrate alike, and praise together Thy most sweet and glorious Name, which is above every name blessed for ever. Let them again and again repeat with joy immense, universal praises to Thy most worthy Name. Let them repeat them as many times as there are stars in Heaven, fishes in the sea, blades of grass on the earth, or letters in the Bible.

And when they have done all this, and humbly offered up all for me, I will then confess to Thee that even yet they have fallen short of Thy ineffable praise which I would fain magnify with all my strength, and exalt above all measure until I attain to those heavenly praises which the voices of mortal men are not able now to reach nor set forth.

13. Thou seest now, O my soul, the greatness and preciousness of the benefits of thy Creator and Redeemer, the LORD thy GOD, to thank Whom even all created beings are insufficient, whom He hath created for the glory and praise of His blessed Name, Who verily needs no glory, for that He is alone sufficient for Himself, and He Who is is His own glory. Behold from

their multitude I could not set all His benefits before thine eyes, but out of the mighty number I have chosen three precious gifts as did the Magi when they made their offerings unto the LORD, and in them all the rest may be included. For every benefit, if thou considerest, is either of nature or of grace, or of superexcellence, and whatever there is may be readily referred to one of these three. In Creation thou hast the benefit of nature, in Redemption of superexcellence, in Justification the gift of grace.

For all and each of these, glory be to Thee, HOLY TRINITY, one co-equal Godhead as it was before all worlds, now is, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.